

**MYTHS OF
THE 1953 IRAN COUP**
RAY TAKEYH

the weekly

Standard

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A photograph of Vladimir Putin sitting on a white modern-style chair. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a white shirt, and a dark tie with small white dots. He has a small green boutonniere on his lapel and a watch on his left wrist. He is looking down and to his right with a slight smile. The background is a blurred blue and white setting.

WHY IS THIS MAN SMILING?

ERIC EDELMAN
on Trump's
disastrous summit

GARRY KASPAROV
on Putin's PR victory

THE EDITORS
on the Russia connection

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Little Coffee Shop of Horrors

The online title of an op-ed in the *New York Times* recently caught our attention: “Racism Is Everywhere, So Why Not Move South?” The observation that the American South isn’t the backward place frequently portrayed by our entertainment industry is not a new one. Nor are appalling expressions of racism totally unheard of in non-Southern cities commonly thought to be progressive—Philadelphia, say, or Chicago. But the acknowledgment of these realities doesn’t ordinarily turn up in the *Times*, so we read the piece with interest.

The author—an African-American millennial who, according to her byline, “is at work on a book about black millennials”—introduces her essay with an anecdote meant to illustrate just how racially bigoted some allegedly forward-thinking Northern cities can be. “Last winter,” she writes, “while waiting for friends on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, I wandered in and out of the boutiques on Madison Avenue. I could feel eyes on me, following me, my big Afro, hoop earrings and even bigger book bag.”

You wince, prepared for some shameful slur. Maybe you also wonder what the earrings and the book bag have to do with anything, but you read on, prepared to feel ashamed of your country. “I went into a coffee

shop—a place that specializes in espresso,” she recalls. “It was full of white men and women laughing and chatting. I took a seat at the counter and the barista asked for my order.”



By now you’re prepared for the worst. And, well, here’s what happened:

“An espresso,” I replied. He didn’t budge.

“Are you sure you want a cup of espresso?”

“Yes,” I said.

He went behind the counter and grabbed a cup. “Are you sure?” he asked again. “Do you know that it comes in this small cup?”

“Yes,” I said. Why else would I have walked into an espresso bar?

I didn’t know what to do, so I did what so many millennials do. I fired

off a complaint on Twitter. And I realized once again that New York is never as progressive as it’s made out to be. Often it’s a lonely place to be young and black.

And that’s it. A barista in New York City was discourteous, if that. And if there’s any evidence that the espresso-jerk’s supercilious pose was racially motivated—as opposed to the reflexive snootiness of NYC coffee-slingers—the author fails to mention it. Isn’t it possible that he asks “Are you sure?” of anyone who orders an espresso, after having gotten complaints, from coffee-house newbies of any color, about the size of espresso cups?

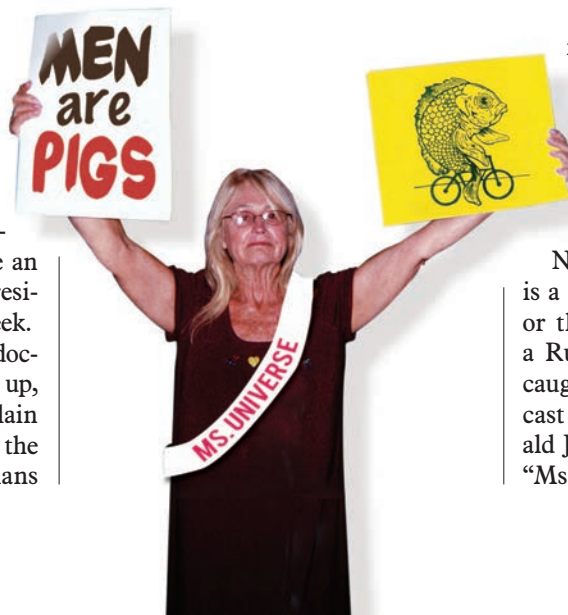
What a happy and prosperous country we must live in when the slightest failure to show politeness and warmth elicits an essay in a national newspaper about the ineradicability of racial bigotry.

The op-ed goes on at some length to list the reasons many African Americans are migrating southward (it’s cheaper, the racism isn’t as bad as it used to be, etc.). The author herself, though, doesn’t want to live there. “I sort of hate the South” is the charming way she puts it. Which is too bad, because if she insists on equating bad manners with racism, she would surely be happier in Birmingham or Savannah than in Manhattan. ♦

Ms-Speaking

THE SCRAPBOOK will leave it to others to comment on the propriety—or lack thereof—of the meeting Donald Trump Jr. arranged with Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya. But we will note an odd feature of the defense the president’s son made for himself last week.

In putting out the email chain documenting how the meeting was set up, Trump the Younger strove to explain how it is that he was acquainted, in the first place, with any of the Russians



involved. The first email in the chain had come from publicist Rob Goldstone, “who was relating a request from Emin,” Donald Jr. wrote, “a person I knew from the 2013 Ms. Universe Pageant near Moscow.”

Now, never mind that Goldstone is a sketchy former Fleet Street hack, or that Emin is the pop-star son of a Russian real estate tycoon: What caught our eye wasn’t the ridiculous cast of characters but the title Donald Jr. gave the pageant in question—“Ms. Universe.” The official name of

SIGN, BIGSTOCK; FIGURE BELOW, MYROCKETHASNOBRAKES

the enterprise is “Miss Universe,” of course (and we’d hate to see the swimsuit competition if the contestants were all inclined to demand being addressed as “Ms.”).

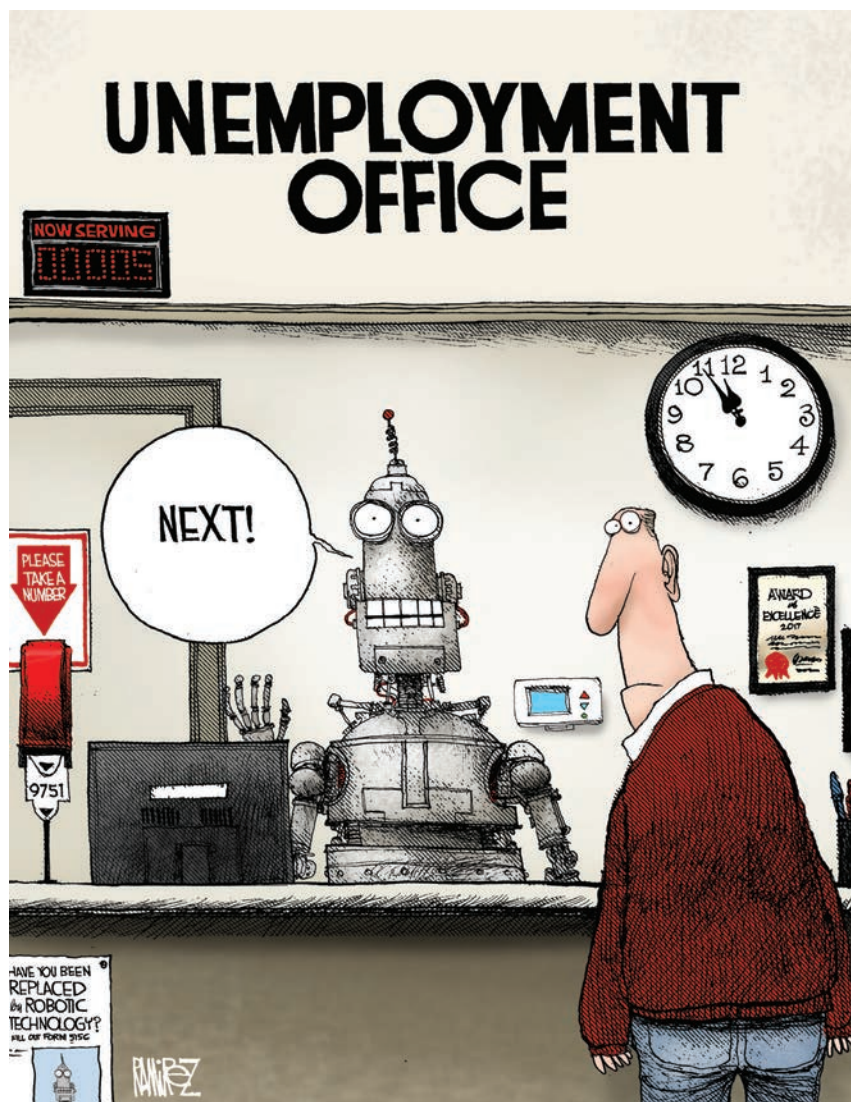
We thought that the appeal of Team Trump was supposed to be its bracing disregard for the conventions of political correctness. Is that no longer operative? And for what? If Don Jr. thinks he’s going to buy himself a little feminist forbearance by casually rebranding the Miss Universe pageant Ms. Universe, he’s even more of a naïf than we suspected. ♦

Hero or Goat?

The latest threat to the American workforce has arrived, and it’s on four hooves.

A public-employee union is up in arms over a team of blue-collar billy-goats employed to clear brush on a college campus. The union claims that by using the animals, Western Michigan University is snatching jobs away from union workers. They’re not kidding around, either—the union has filed a grievance against the university. Their complaint is a sort of inversion of Orwell’s *Animal Farm* motto: Two legs good, four legs *ba-a-a-a-d*.

What’s particularly delightful about this conflict is how it pits two key leftist enterprises—public-employee unions and college environmentalists—against one another. After all, the reason Western Michigan University chose goat grazers in the first place was concern for the environment. Eschewing chemicals, the college instead opted for the green solution, hiring a team of 20 goats to clear 10 acres of rough bramble and poison ivy. Last year a trip of 10 goats proved efficient and sus-



tainable, and the current flock is ahead of schedule.

Alas, such environmental considerations weren’t enough to pacify the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. The union was quick to leap to the defense of its members in the face of the ruminant menace.

And just how great is that menace? The *Washington Post* did the math and found that in one month, one person with a tractor can do the work of 3,600 goats. Even if all 2.5 million goats in the United States were employed, they would only threaten 347 full-time human jobs nationwide.

Small as that number may be (and

it’s nothing compared with the threat posed by automated robot goats), it’s not nonexistent, which leaves leftists with a dilemma. It seems to THE SCRAPBOOK that there is an obvious compromise that would satisfy all parties: The goats should unionize. ♦

Proverbial Politics

Florida senator Marco Rubio is fond of tweeting out Bible verses to his followers. Lately, he’s been quoting the Book of Proverbs. Believe it or not, this is grounds for criticism—and from a Hebrew Bible professor at the Yale Divinity School no less. Prof. Joel Baden writes in *Politico* that “Proverbs

GOAT, BIGSTOCK

is probably the most Republican book of the entire Bible.”

How so? “Proverbs is notable in that [it] presents a fairly consistent view of the world: The righteous are rewarded, and the wicked are punished,” he explains. “In the understanding of Proverbs, everyone gets what is coming to them; be-



The wisdom of Solomon

havior is directly linked to reward or punishment.” There are worse things that could be associated with a party’s worldview.

Proverbs is traditionally attributed to King Solomon—a point Rubio used to poke fun at Baden. Linking to the *Politico* story, Rubio tweeted, “Proverbs is the Republican part of the bible? I don’t think Solomon had yet joined the GOP when he wrote the first 29 chapters of Proverbs.”

As silly as Baden’s politicization of Proverbs may be, he deserves praise for one passing remark: “The Bible is the foundational text of Western civilization, after all.” Clearly, Baden hadn’t gotten the memo.

Just days before, President Trump’s invocation of Western civilization in his Warsaw speech was savaged by the center-left. *Vox* called the speech “an alt-right manifesto” and used scare quotes for Western “civilization” and “values.” The *Atlantic* also scare-quoted “civilization,” insisting that Trump’s version “boils down to ties of ethnicity and blood.”

For the record, THE SCRAPBOOK believes in Western civilization (no arch punctuation required). Reassessing tradition is a noble Western enterprise, but equating ancient wisdom with modern politics is foolish. As is written in Proverbs, “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” At least that’s the way it’s written in the King James Version, the most Republican translation of the Bible, we’re told. ♦

‘M’ for, You Know—Respectability

This year’s winners have been announced in prizes recognizing advocates who support “First Amendment rights and rational [read licentious] sex and drug policies,” the Hugh M. Hefner First Amendment Awards. That’s right, Hugh M. Hefner. Is there anyone who wouldn’t have known for whom the prize was named had the “M” (for “Marston”) not been included? Is it possible that in such an august context the founder of *Playboy* felt naked without his middle initial?

The unnecessary use of middle initials is one of those commonplace bits of puffery that makes us smile. It’s one thing if your name is James Smith: Given the superabundance of people sharing those first and last



names, one might well be forgiven for adding an initial to one’s moniker to make it clear which of the many James Smiths you happen to be. But Hugh Hefner? Does he really need to be distinguished from Hugh Q. Hefner and

Hugh H. Hefner? The man’s name is a brand—one well enough established that he’s known universally as just plain “Hef.”

Which suggests an alternative name for the prize. Instead of the ludicrous pomposity of the Hugh M. Hefner First Amendment Awards, how about just the Heffies? ♦

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Petty Cash

I'm a man who uses a tea bag twice, and tells himself that the tea often tastes better on the second use of the bag. I go out of my way to buy gas for my car at a station where it is usually 20 to 35 cents a gallon less than at a much closer station. When I discover red grapes or tangerines at a dollar cheaper per pound than the usual price at my nearby supermarket, I refrain from doing my touchdown dance, but I do find myself quietly pleased. If the weather is temperate enough for a few days in July or August for me not to have to turn on the air conditioning in our apartment, well, you won't be surprised to learn, I'm cool with that.

Robert Hutchins, the president of the University of Chicago, said that if you have to watch the meter, you shouldn't take cabs. I watch the meter and while doing so recall that Hutchins, a man with a handsome expense account all his adult days, probably never paid for a cab in his life. A few years ago I was taken by a wealthy couple to Daniel, the then-hot French restaurant in New York. "Didn't I read somewhere that you were opposed to expensive wines?" my host, pouring a glass of wine for me, remarked. "Not at all," I corrected him. "I'm only opposed to paying for expensive wines." The notion of buying a \$200 bottle of wine is upsetting to me, but then so, too, would be that of picking up a dinner check for \$680 for four people, or spending \$500 to take three kids to a baseball game, or spending the same sum for dinner and a night at the opera for two. Wrong, all of it, it all feels wrong.

Am I describing a genuine cheap-

skate here, or is something else going on? You will not, I think, be shocked to learn I believe something else is going on. Plain fact is, I don't like waste. My father, a generous man, who gave large sums to charity and could be counted on to help out members of his extended family in need, when walking into an empty room in our apartment in which someone had left on the lights would invariably say, "Someone around



here must think I have stock in General Electric." As a small boy growing up during World War II, if I left any food on my plate, I was generally told that the people in Europe were starving and would be appalled by such waste.

I don't believe a distaste for waste, which seems to have been ingrained in me, suggests either avarice or miserliness on my part. (I don't think it suggests superior virtue, either.) I pick up my share of checks. I, too, give (though more modestly than did my father) to charity. I recognize the ultimate hopelessness of attempting to be economically mod-

erate in all one's dealings. One saves a bit here, then blows a lot there; it's the way it goes. A good friend who shares my general view on this matter, a man wealthier than I, and who not long ago was going through a costly divorce, told me that the previous month he had received a bill for \$14,000 from his divorce lawyer. "It drains all the satisfaction," he said, "of coming upon a bargain in orange juice."

I am not an unimaginative man. When younger I was a pretty good fantasist. I fantasized athletic triumphs, attracting dazzling women, literary fame. But I never fantasized, nor do I now, having great wealth. Trumpian apartments on Park Avenue, in London, Paris, Rome; my own jet plane; owning a major sports franchise or two—such acquisitions haven't the least interest for me. So far am I from harboring such fantasies that I can scarcely imagine buying two pairs of shoes at once.

My relation to money is mundane. Mine is the small-business mind par excellence, content with the most minor advantage. Too much wealth, even if it isn't mine, makes me slightly edgy. My hero in this regard, the man who speaks for me and my own relation to money, is Faulkner's sewing-machine salesman V.K. Ratliff, the character that appears throughout his *Snopes* trilogy. At one point Ratliff, visiting in New York, is offered the gift of three neckties that would cost \$75 each, a big figure in the 1940s. Ratliff says he cannot possibly accept such expensive ties, adding that so long as people lie, cheat, steal, and even kill for money, the least he can do is respect it. I vigorously second the motion.

Meanwhile, if you hear about a price under \$3.99 a pound for Honeycrisp apples, please don't fail to get in touch.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

Wrapped in an Enigma

It took some time, but here we are. After decades of minimizing the menace posed by Russia—recall Barack Obama’s gibe, in response to Mitt Romney’s suggestion that Russia was our greatest geopolitical threat, that the 1980s had called and wanted their foreign policy back—American liberals are suddenly convinced of the Russian government’s malevolence toward the United States. We’re glad to see our friends on the left take a more clear-sighted view of an adversary, even if this new conviction has taken the rather strange form of an unshakable certitude that Donald Trump’s campaign staff and its surrogates illegally collaborated with Russian operatives in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the 2016 election.

Not that we lack evidence that Moscow attempted to influence last year’s election. Mike Flynn, Trump’s first national security adviser, had undisclosed contacts with Russian officials; Sen. Jeff Sessions, an early Trump ally and the president’s attorney general, forgot about more than one meeting with Russia’s ambassador to the United States; and a Trump campaign adviser named Carter Page had relationships with numerous Russian officials.

There are plenty of suspicious oddities, too. Longtime Trump associate Roger Stone acknowledged his relationship with the Kremlin-tied hacker known as Guccifer 2.0; and Paul Manafort, briefly the Trump campaign’s chairman, has a history of well-paid work for foreign politicians and companies tied to the Russian government.

All very odd, but none of it alone would necessarily lead an unbiased observer to believe the Trump campaign had colluded with Russia. Then, in May, the *Washington Post* published a story revealing that last December Jared Kushner, the president’s son-in-law, had asked the Russian ambassador about the possibility of Trump transition officials using Russian diplomatic facilities to communicate with the Kremlin, apparently in order to avoid monitoring by U.S. officials.

And this week, we learned from the *New York Times* about Donald Trump Jr.’s meeting with an individ-

ual purportedly representing the Russian government.

On June 3, 2016, with Trump on the verge of securing the Republican nomination for president, the candidate’s eldest son was approached via email by an entertainment publicist named Rob Goldstone claiming to have a source of damaging information about Hillary Clinton. The source, whom Goldstone later said was a “Russian government attorney,” was offering documents that “would incriminate Hillary and her dealings with Russia and would be very

useful to your father. . . . This is obviously very high level and sensitive information, but is part of Russia and its government’s support for Mr. Trump.”

Trump Jr.’s reply: “If it’s what you say I love it.”

Political campaigns are often approached by people claiming to possess evidence that, if known, would do irreparable harm to an opponent. And most campaigns are happy to listen: Such is the unsavory nature of politics. Usually, the campaign dispatches a trusted third party to find out what it’s all about and whether it amounts to anything.

In this case, however, Donald Jr. chose to meet personally with Goldstone’s contact at Trump Tower. And he didn’t just agree to a meeting; he urged Kushner and Manafort to join him. Which they did.

If we believe their story, the three got nothing for their time. The “Russian government attorney,” Natalia Veselnitskaya, was just there to lobby the men on the subject of the Magnitsky Act, a 2012 law fiercely opposed by Vladimir Putin because it allows the U.S. government to seize the assets of designated human rights abusers. Both Donald Jr. and Veselnitskaya insist she had nothing of significance to reveal about Hillary Clinton.

The exchange might have amounted to very little, but for the fact that Donald Jr. seems to have believed that Veselnitskaya was in direct contact with the Kremlin. That he agreed to talk to her on the subject of Hillary Clinton is clear evidence that the president’s son was eager to “collude” with Russia for the purpose of ruining the campaign of an American political opponent. Not only that: He forwarded



Donald Trump Jr. tries to get his story straight.

the email correspondence between himself and Goldstone to Manafort and Kushner—meaning that three of the people closest to candidate Trump were ready to collaborate with a foreign government for the purpose of influencing the outcome of an American election.

Despite all this—despite the facts that (a) a hostile power put substantial resources into efforts to subvert the American electoral process, and (b) the winning candidate's son was ready to play along—Donald Jr. as far as we know hasn't done anything illegal. What he and his confreres are guilty of, rather, is sleaze and incompetence—and, in Donald Jr.'s case, a series of lies to divert attention from what the meeting with Veselnitskaya was really about. First, he claimed there was no campaign-related meeting with any Russian; then he admitted to one, but only a “short introductory meeting”; then he admitted the Clinton opposition research had come up but said that the meeting had been scheduled to discuss an adoption program for Russian children. Only when the *New York Times* indicated that it possessed the emails between Donald Jr. and Goldstone did the former release them to the public.

Is this the last significant revelation about the Russian Connection? Unlikely. On June 7, 2016, a few hours after Trump Jr. confirmed his scheduled meeting with Veselnitskaya, his father was declaring victory in the Republican primaries. Speaking in New York, he stated his intention to “give a major speech” in which he would discuss the Clintons' many perfidies. “Hillary Clinton turned the State Department into her own private hedge fund,” Trump remarked: “The Russians, the Saudis, the Chinese all gave money to Bill and Hillary and got favorable treatment in return.”

Trump Jr. says he never told his father about the meeting with Veselnitskaya, and the president initially said he didn't know about it until a few days before the *Times* story ran. But, in a July 12 conversation with reporters on Air Force One, the president noted that he may have been told about the meeting after all: “In fact maybe it was mentioned at some point.” Trump's admission came in a 70-minute interview that had been declared off-the-record. The following day, Trump suggested to Maggie Haberman of the *New York Times* that the session could be retroactively treated as on the record—meaning reporters could quote from it at will. When the White House released excerpts from the session, Trump's admission-against-interest was nowhere to be found. A press pool report later noted the omission and printed the quotation.

For months Trump's fiercest adversaries have drawn parallels with Richard Nixon and Watergate. We'd say Team Trump's bumbling incompetence looks pretty amateur next to Nixon's elaborate and circumspect scheming. What the Trump-Russia affair has most in common with Watergate is that it's going to last a long time. The chances that Robert Mueller's investigation will produce nothing look vanishingly thin: If the *Times* can learn details like these, a team of

attorneys with subpoena powers will likely uncover a great deal more.

Which is bad news for the president's congressional agenda—he can expect total obstruction from Democrats from this point on—and bad news, too, for the president's capacity to challenge Russian interference and expansionism. With Putin's regime in effect occupying eastern Ukraine, threatening the Baltic states, and backing Syria and Iran, American foreign policy desperately needs coherence and consistency—precisely the qualities the Trump administration seems unable to give it. A president unable to deal wisely and decisively with America's greatest geopolitical threat is a president destined for failure and maybe disaster.

Most Americans want the president to succeed. The Kremlin, we assume, does not. And so far the Kremlin is getting its way. ♦

As Time Goes By

As we go to press, Donald Trump is visiting Paris. His visit can't help but remind us of a famous trip to Paris by an American over three-quarters of a century ago. That American businessman, Rick Blaine, had little in common with Donald Trump—except perhaps a propensity to brand businesses with their own names. And even then, one must say that Rick's Café Américain was run in a somewhat different spirit than Trump Tower.

In any case, we trust that President Trump's departure from Paris won't be as melancholy as Rick's. We hope that his experiences in the city of lights won't bring back painful memories. Indeed, we hope that Trump, like Rick, learns lessons from his stay in Paris—lessons about the importance of political freedom, and individual sacrifice, and personal honor.

We shall see.

For us, though, we're reminded of a different lesson as we recall Rick Blaine's story: Time goes by.

It was only 13 years after *Casablanca* appeared that Bill Buckley launched *National Review*. That was 62 years ago. Sixty-two years is a long time. Sixty-two years before Buckley's magazine was born, Grover Cleveland was president. Although the early *National Review* was probably sympathetic to the agenda of Grover Cleveland, Buckley didn't often invoke his name or example. Time had gone by.

A quarter-century after *National Review* appeared, Ronald Reagan won the presidency. That was 37 years ago. Thirty-seven years is a long time. Thirty-seven years before Reagan's victory, Franklin Roosevelt was president. And although Reagan occasionally appealed to Roosevelt, he didn't try to be Roosevelt.

A lot of time has now gone by since we had a fresh

conservative movement. Eric Hofer's observation comes to mind: "Every great cause begins as a movement, becomes a business, and eventually degenerates into a racket." A lot of time has gone by since we had a Republican president with a bold and fresh and confident conservative agenda. We remember those days. We know there are important lessons to be learned from them. But it's not a viable political program simply to seek to restore them.

Indeed, the more we have tried to begin to think through a post-Trump agenda, the more struck we have been that it needs to be newly thought through. It needs to be newly thought through in light of recent history and present circumstances.

Everyone is familiar with Lincoln's statement in his second annual message to Congress: "As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew." That is our case as well. But people are perhaps less aware of Lincoln's next line: "We must disenthral ourselves, and then we shall save our country."



Rick Blaine in 'Casablanca'

Disenthralment is difficult. It's especially difficult when one very much respects and admires one's forebears, as we should and as conservatives are in any case inclined to do. But it's true that, like Rick in *Casablanca*, we eventually have to move beyond the reveries of the past—however painful this can be.

It's important to stress that disenthralment is not enthrallment with what is simply novel, or a credulous belief in progressivism. Progressives disdain the past and foolishly condescend to our predecessors. Disenthralment is not disdain. Thinking anew does not mean thinking as a progressive.

And it's important to emphasize that however much we must think and act anew, the core truth of conservatism still holds: Principles remain as times change. After all,

*The fundamental things apply
As time goes by.*

—William Kristol

Speaking Up for Free Speech

THOMAS J. DONOHUE

PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Last week I wrote about an important freedom that allows our nation to succeed and prosper: free enterprise. This week I'd like to talk about another core freedom: free speech. The right to express ideas and defend one's point of view is crucial to the functioning of America's political system, society, and economy. And this right is under attack today.

This should concern the business community greatly, because we're often the prime target. Attacks on free speech in this country have been growing steadily in recent years across many institutions, but business free speech has been the No. 1 target for legislators, regulators, and activists.

These threats take many forms—legislation and regulations designed to threaten the political

engagement of business groups and others. Outrageous fines being legally extorted from companies by prosecutorial agencies. Abusive efforts by agencies like the IRS to single out and punish organizations having a different view of what is right for our nation. Overzealous academic speech codes, restraints on journalists, and a disturbing lack of respect for other voices and viewpoints.

Plenty of people disagree with the positions of the business community. And that's fine. They should fight us on the battleground of ideas. Tell the American people we're dead wrong. But don't shut down and choke off our right—or the right of any other American citizen or institution—to speak up and speak out. This country must never go down the path of criminalizing policy and political differences.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is standing up to these attacks. We're refusing to be intimidated

or sidelined. In the courts and in the court of public opinion, we're keeping up the fight to ensure that businesses can use their words and their resources to promote ideas and support the causes they care about. And we're proud to advocate for the rights of everyone to do the same—including students on college campuses, the media, and even our opponents.

As job creators and engines of economic growth, businesses and their leaders deserve a say in the direction of our government, economy, and society. Not only do they have a right to stand up and voice their views, but doing so is critical to the success of our country. Every American has a stake in business and the ideas that ensure its survival and prosperity. That's why the Chamber will never let up in our defense of free speech in all its forms.



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He Still Hasn't Torn It Up

The Iran deal lives—for now.

BY MICHAEL WARREN & JENNA LIFHITS



Tillerson and Trump: It isn't time to blow the deal up yet.

Donald Trump hates the Iran nuclear deal. Brokered by the Obama administration and officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the agreement has the stated purpose of preventing Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability. But the president believes the deal gave Iran what it desperately wanted—relief from economic sanctions—while providing few to no mechanisms for pressuring Tehran to stop expanding its nuclear program. So the administration has quietly started talking about negotiating a new deal instead.

Bob Corker, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, says Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has told him as much. “I’ve had very

good conversations with Tillerson about it,” says Corker. “I know his goal is, again, to have a different agreement over time that prevents them from ever enriching [uranium].” A White House source characterizes the administration’s ideal outcome as neither scrapping the JCPOA nor modifying it. Instead, the administration would seek a new follow-on deal with buy-in from the European allies who signed onto the agreement in Vienna two years ago.

What would a new Iran deal look like? Generally speaking, it would do away with what the Trump administration views as the JCPOA’s most deadly flaw: the so-called sunset provisions that limit the length of time Iran faces restrictions on uranium enrichment. It would also impose more and broader nonnuclear sanctions, with tougher enforcement measures, on Iran for any failure to implement and comply with the deal. The details are

unclear but will be worked out during the administration’s ongoing interagency Iran policy review, led by senior members of the president’s National Security Council.

But expert observers, including even some within the White House, say a new deal would be nearly impossible to achieve. Attempting to do so could enrage European allies, who have swooped into Iran to do business following the JCPOA’s sanctions relief. It could also give the Iranians another opening to accuse the United States of violating the current deal and acting in bad faith.

On the other hand, Mark Dubowitz, the CEO of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and an outside adviser to the administration on the Iran deal, says the Europeans would welcome amendments to the JCPOA that make permanent the current deal’s sunset provisions. “The Europeans I talk with privately say that’s consistent with what they want to see,” says Dubowitz. The Trump administration, he adds, is “not going to be paralyzed by this perennial Washington desire to have the Europeans buy in to everything.”

Either way, the possibility of a better deal has driven the administration’s plan to recertify the JCPOA for a second time, in accordance with a congressional mandate, on July 17. The decision, which continues to provide Iran with sanctions relief for its alleged fulfillment of the terms of the deal, comes after an intense internal debate within the administration about the pros and cons of recertification and just days after leading hawks on Capitol Hill urged the president not to certify Tehran’s compliance.

“The Trump administration is currently conducting a comprehensive review of our Iran policy,” said a State Department spokesperson in an email to THE WEEKLY STANDARD. “Once we have finalized our conclusions, we will meet the challenges Iran poses with clarity and conviction. The Trump Administration has made clear that at least until this review is completed, we will adhere to the JCPOA and will ensure that Iran is held strictly accountable to its requirements.”

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The situation is exceedingly frustrating for President Trump, who promised on the campaign trail to “tear up” the Iran deal and called it his “number-one priority.” The administration already certified Iranian compliance with the deal’s terms in April, in accordance with a 2015 law that requires the State Department to confirm to Congress every 90 days that Iran is “fully implementing” the agreement, not in “material breach” of the agreement, and not acting against America’s national-security interests.

Experts disagree about whether Iran has fulfilled these requirements. The president believes the regime continues to act in violation of the spirit as well as specific provisions of the deal. Reports have shown that Iran has stockpiled heavy water in excess of the deal’s threshold, is capable of mass producing advanced nuclear centrifuges, and has repeatedly attempted to purchase nuclear technology illegally.

For these reasons, four hawkish Republican senators wrote a letter last week urging President Trump not to certify. “In April, you certified Iran’s compliance for the first 90-day period of the Trump administration,” reads the letter, signed by Senators Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, David Perdue, and Ted Cruz. “That certification was understandable, given the need to grant time for the interagency review of the JCPOA that you described in the certification letter you sent to House Speaker Paul Ryan. But now as we near the end of another 90-day review period, U.S. interests would be best served by a sober accounting of Iran’s JCPOA violations as well as the regime’s aggressive and destabilizing behavior.”

“He thinks they’re right,” says one White House source of President Trump’s thinking. But his secretary of state, who has been delegated the authority on recertification, seems to have won the internal argument for the moment.

Tillerson believes that because the deal was frontloaded with benefits for Iran, leaving it now would reduce the ability of the international community to seek compliance at a time

when Iran is already reaping rewards for simply signing the deal. Secretary of Defense James Mattis backs Tillerson on recertification, while Steve Bannon has argued for abandoning the agreement. National security adviser H.R. McMaster is no supporter of the deal but has sought to facilitate debate among the principals rather than push the president in one direction or another. CIA director Mike Pompeo, an outspoken critic of the deal when he was in Congress, remains skeptical.

If recertification is a step to renegotiating a bad deal into a better one, the most hawkish members of the Trump administration—including and

especially the president himself—will grit their teeth and go along. And with a more comprehensive Iran policy, the administration could pursue a strategy to satisfy congressional hawks like Marco Rubio.

“It’s not just about the certification,” says Rubio. “It’s also about what the follow-up plans are on the violations of missiles, violations on human rights, violations on supporting terrorism, cyber violations, maritime violations.”

Rubio adds: “We should not be prohibited from pursuing additional sanctions on those violations, and I think there are many in the White House that agree with that assessment.” ♦

What Happened in Hamburg

The worst U.S.-Russia summit since 1961?

BY ERIC EDELMAN

The president-elect’s narrow victory at the end of a volatile campaign quickly led to efforts at planning a meeting of the American and Russian leaders. Relations between the two countries had deteriorated badly, not to say spectacularly, in the last year of the previous administration, amidst mutual recriminations about spying. Russia’s activist ambassador began assiduously working his contacts in the president-elect’s entourage to assess the new team’s attitude and prospects for improved relations. Heedless of experts counseling caution, the impetuous new chief executive plunged ahead with plans to meet his more experienced and wily counterpart, driven by the conviction that he could improve a relationship damaged by his blundering predecessor.

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The year was 1961, and John F. Kennedy’s summit meeting with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna that June is generally considered to have been a disaster. Owing to insufficient diplomatic preparation, there was no set agenda for the meeting, which was billed as an opportunity to get acquainted. Khrushchev concluded that the inexperienced new president was weak and unlikely to respond forcefully to Soviet actions. Within the next year he would trigger two crises that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. He was emboldened to step up the pressure on Berlin—the wall started going up in August. And the summit almost certainly encouraged Khrushchev to believe that he could deploy nuclear weapons to Cuba surreptitiously and that, confronted by a fait accompli, Kennedy was likely to back down. It was arguably the most dangerous moment in the Cold War. In the words

of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, the two nuclear superpowers were “eyeball to eyeball,” with the very real prospect of a devastating nuclear exchange.

This history was of course brought to mind by the performance of President Donald Trump in his first meeting with Russia’s Vladimir Putin. The eerie parallels speak for themselves. As Karl Marx famously wrote in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, history repeats itself, “first as tragedy, second as farce.” But there is an important difference—Kennedy had the wit to realize that Khrushchev had gotten the better of the exchange. He told the *New York Times*’s James Reston on background that it was the “Worst thing in my life, he savaged me.” President Trump and his acolytes, on the other hand, appear to believe the July 7 meeting of the two leaders in Hamburg went very well indeed. According to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson’s briefing to the press, “the meeting was very constructive. The two leaders, I would say, connected very quickly. There was a very clear positive chemistry between the two.”

More realistically, the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, hardly a bastion of hostility to Trump, soberly noted that “we’ll find out in the coming weeks how Vladimir Putin sized up Donald Trump in their first mano a mano meeting on Friday, but one bad sign is the Trump team’s post-meeting resort to Obama-like rhetoric of cooperation and shared U.S.-Russia purposes.”

Here is why the meeting not only was not a success but was likely a disaster for U.S.-Russia relations and global order. The absence of an agenda on the U.S. side (as national security adviser H.R. McMaster admitted before the event) guaranteed that Putin (who most assuredly always has an agenda) would dominate and drive the conversation. Moreover, a limit on the number of participants left Trump without the services of McMaster and his senior

director for Russia, the very impressive Fiona Hill. The U.S. side is now dependent on the interpreters’ notes for a record of the discussion, not having had a Russian speaker who knows Putin well in the meeting, someone who might have picked up important nuances in the conversation.

The Russian agenda for the meeting was clear: to (1) deflect the issue of hacking and interference in the U.S. election, (2) preserve Russia’s position as the arbiter of Syria’s future, including after the liberation of Raqqa from ISIS, and (3) set the stage for the removal of post-Crimea sanctions



and normalization of the situation in Ukraine, in anticipation that the government in Kiev will ultimately collapse and Russia will be able to pick up the pieces. Trump’s lack of preparation appears to have advanced Russia’s agenda in each of these areas.

On the election interference issue, Tillerson said that the president pressed Putin. The Russians say that Trump accepted Putin’s denials that Moscow had improperly interfered in the election campaign and agreed to move on. Tillerson asserted that Trump and Putin “had a very robust and lengthy exchange on the subject” and that “the president pressed President Putin on more than one occasion

regarding Russian involvement.” Trump’s own subsequent tweet saying he had “already given my opinion”—a reference to his press conference statement the previous day that no one really knows who did it—suggests that the Russian account is closer to the truth. Moreover, Tillerson is reported to have told associates privately that he was stunned that the president opened the discussion by saying “I’m going to get this out of the way,” in effect signaling his lack of seriousness about the issue.

On Syria, Trump and Putin reached a deconfliction agreement for the area in southern Syria along the Jordanian border. As the *Lawfare* blog noted:

The agreement is notable in that it protects some of the rebels’ embattled territory, preserving their role in negotiating the future of Syria; that is a significant win for the United States despite Washington’s limited leverage in the Syrian civil war. But Russia probably gets the better end of the bargain: The agreement builds on the Astana framework negotiated by Russia, will rely on Russian forces to monitor and enforce the ceasefire, and follows the U.S. government’s decision to drop its stated policy calling for the removal of Bashar al-Assad.

More troubling still was Tillerson’s assertion that “Russia has the same, I think, interest that we do in having Syria become a stable place, a unified place, but ultimately a place where we can facilitate a political discussion about their future, including the future leadership of Syria.” It was this statement that some labeled as “Kerry-speak.”

Anyone who has followed the developments in Syria since 2011 and who thinks the United States and Russia share the same interests there is simply delusional. Putin sees the rebellion in Syria as a U.S.-sponsored “color revolution” whose ultimate objective is Assad’s removal. Russia’s professions of concern about ISIS belie its record of bombing and killing

GARY LOCKE

the very “moderate” forces the U.S. government has been training, Moscow’s aim being to present Washington with a binary choice between ISIS and accepting the continuation of the murderous Assad regime. This does not even begin to touch on Russian war crimes and support for Assad’s use of chemical weapons.

On Ukraine, Trump tweeted that sanctions on Russia had not been discussed at the meeting, but it is not clear what to make of the appointment of former NATO ambassador Kurt Volker, a formidable diplomat with no illusions about Russia, as U.S. special representative for Ukraine. Under normal circumstances Volker’s selection would be welcomed by critics of U.S. passivity in the face of Russia’s destabilization of eastern Ukraine. The signal sent by his announcement, however, was vitiated by Tillerson’s explanation that the envoy position was created “at the request of President Putin.” The danger here is that Putin is creating a “special channel” to lay the groundwork for normalization and U.S. concessions in return for worthless Russian promises.

What did the Russian side likely take away from this first meeting between the two leaders? It appears that they have taken Trump’s measure and see him as someone whom they can manipulate by flattery, whose lack of preparation enables them to drive the agenda, and who is unwilling to exact costs on them for the extraordinary act of interfering in U.S. elections.

Already Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov is talking about expelling up to 30 U.S. diplomats and perhaps appropriating U.S. properties in Moscow in retaliation for the expulsion of Russian personnel and seizure of Russian diplomatic recreational facilities by the Obama administration at the end of 2016. This is likely only the beginning. Putin decided that Obama was someone whose “greater flexibility” in the second term he could use to advantage. Hamburg no doubt taught him he is not facing a more determined adversary but rather that he is getting more of the same. ♦

Vladimir Putin’s PR Victory

Will he never pay a price for his hostile acts?

BY GARRY KASPAROV



Putin and Trump meet during the G20 summit in Hamburg, July 7.

There was nothing normal about the July 7 meeting between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin during the G20 summit in Hamburg. The mere scheduling of this friendly chat handed Putin a PR victory, which the Kremlin-controlled media exploited gleefully. Not only was the Russian dictator not isolated or under pressure for invading Ukraine, enabling Bashar al-Assad’s genocide in Syria, and interfering in the U.S. presidential election, but the American president announced that it was an honor to meet with him.

Putin hardly needs encouragement to pursue further hostile acts.

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As fashionable as it may be to blame everything to do with Russia on Trump, the above-listed crimes all took place during the presidency of Barack Obama. Putin likely would not recognize deterrence if he saw it. Yet replacing Obama’s worthless red lines with Trump’s red carpet only fuels the Russian threat to the world order.

The headlines are all about apparent collusion between the Trump team and the Kremlin during the 2016 campaign. But what if Trump is still sharing information with Russia? We know that Putin isn’t an ally of the United States. What we don’t know is if he’s an ally of the president of the United States. Colluding with Russian intelligence as a presidential candidate and lying about it may not be illegal. What about doing so after taking an oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution?

It was a bad sign that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson was the only senior American figure present at the meeting between Trump and Putin. While he was discreet enough not to wear the friendship medal he was awarded personally by Putin in 2013, Tillerson cannot be considered a check on Trump's mysterious affection for the Russian.

Tillerson has been scarcely perceptible in his six months at his post. He has acquiesced to an empty State Department and to having important diplomatic duties handed over to Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. Tillerson's sycophancy and ineptitude have put him in reach of being a worse secretary of state than Hillary Clinton or John Kerry.

And who knows what comes out of Trump's mouth in meetings like this? He shared classified intelligence with Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov in the Oval Office in May and showed little understanding of the dangers of blabbing to America's geopolitical opponents. The complete lack of discretion or impulse control evident daily in Trump's Twitter feed can hardly be expected to vanish in private conversations with foreign leaders he is eager to impress.

Our only reports on what was discussed by Trump and Putin at their meeting come from Tillerson and Lavrov, and they are equally hopeless. The Kremlin crafts responses designed to flatter Trump personally while making ridiculous claims of progress and cooperation. Trump is himself an unreliable narrator due to equal measures of ignorance and mendacity. When forced to choose which side to believe under such conditions, it's safest to assume that neither account should be trusted.

Trump is attempting to run the American government as a family concern, from his daughter Ivanka's briefly taking his seat at the G20 to his sons and son-in-law holding ill-defined mandates with no official accountability. This is ideal for Putin, who prefers to do business with a few pliable individuals behind closed

doors. No doubt he has said as much to Trump, telling him how great men shouldn't have to worry about the petty concerns of legislators, journalists, and judges—or unimportant nations like Ukraine.

Nepotism is inefficient and corrupt

at best. It also has unique dangers. When things go badly wrong—when a president's son admits to colluding with a hostile foreign power during a campaign, for example—what won't that president be willing to sacrifice to protect his family? ♦

They Didn't Always Meet the Press

Presidential hostility to reporters has a long tradition. **BY PHILIP TERZIAN**



Franklin D. Roosevelt surrounded by reporters at an early press conference

Jim Acosta, senior White House correspondent for CNN, has acquired a certain renown lately for his habitual, and carefully staged, verbal confrontations in the White House press room with President Trump's press secretary, Sean Spicer. You could make the argument that both Spicer and Acosta, in their respective positions, are probably

in over their heads, and deserve one another. But while I'm content to refrain from making personnel recommendations to Spicer's boss, there is an underlying fallacy in Acosta's public posturing—generally supported by colleagues in the media—that ought to be clarified.

And that is this: While it may be annoying that Sean Spicer tends to spin rather than respond to inquiries, or turn off the TV cameras when a public briefing begins, or even that

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President Trump manifestly dislikes the political press corps, there is nothing especially new about any of this—and the media privileges and access that Acosta and his colleagues value are very recent in the history of press-presidential relations.

To begin with, it is axiomatic that presidents dislike, or at any rate distrust, the press. And how could it be otherwise? Politicians and reporters, for the most part, function at cross-purposes. The greatest secretary of state of the 20th century, Dean Acheson, was always guarded around journalists, even in private social settings, because (as he once explained) their devotion to getting the story always trumped personal friendship or national interest. Modern presidents who have been famously friendly with reporters—Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, or John F. Kennedy—instinctively knew that journalists are no less susceptible to flattery than statesmen, and both were fully capable of extraordinary pettiness when individual pressmen displeased them. Once, at an Oval Office press conference in 1942, FDR suggested, not entirely facetiously, that John O'Donnell of the *New York Daily News* should be awarded the (German) Iron Cross for his critical World War II reporting. Twenty years later, JFK ostentatiously canceled the White House subscriptions to the (liberal Republican and, alas, long since defunct) *New York Herald Tribune*.

Second, and more important, such venerable institutions as press conferences, daily televised briefings, a huge White House apparatus to respond to media inquiries, not to say the underlying principle that presidents are accountable to the press, are of very recent vintage. Even the West Wing press room where correspondents linger, and where Jim Acosta rises from his seat to challenge Sean Spicer, was constructed as recently as 1969—and by President Richard Nixon, of all commanders in chief—over Roosevelt's old indoor swimming pool.

Until well into the 20th century, in fact, the Washington press corps was comparatively modest in size, and

most “White House correspondents” covered everything in town. James Madison and Andrew Jackson, even Abraham Lincoln, might have complained privately about the scribblers of their time—and they did, in fractious terms—but none ever dealt with individual writers or felt obliged to respond publicly to any periodical. It was not until the Civil War that Congress appropriated funds for what we would now recognize as a (tiny) White House staff, and it was Lincoln who first deputized presidential secretaries—John Hay and John Nicolay, his future biographers—to deal with journalists.

James Madison and Andrew Jackson, even Abraham Lincoln, might have complained privately about the scribblers of their time—and they did, in fractious terms—but none ever dealt with individual writers or felt obliged to respond publicly to any periodical.

Just a century ago, especially with Theodore Roosevelt's tenure, the modern era began to take shape. Reporters tended to submit questions in writing, rather than ask them directly, and answers (from the White House staff) were usually furnished in writing as well. Calvin Coolidge met with the press in person, usually in the Oval Office, some 520 times in five-and-a-half years, but reporters were forbidden to quote the president directly, initiating the surviving practice of citing a “White House spokesman” or “senior official.”

Herbert Hoover was the first president to hire an assistant specifically assigned to deal with journalists; and while FDR, in his 12 years in office, held a staggering 998 press conferences, correspondents were herded into the Oval Office on command and, in line with custom, forbidden to quote Roosevelt directly. It was Dwight D. Eisenhower—probably

at the behest of his press secretary, a shrewd ex-*New York Times* reporter named James Hagerty—who instituted regular, and occasionally televised, press conferences and ended the ban on direct quotation.

Since then, of course, the political success of presidents has depended, to some degree, on their skill at repartee and the sympathies of the press corps. Kennedy enjoyed the give-and-take of his “live” daytime press conferences in a State Department auditorium, where his easy charm and casual dismissal of critics (notably the elderly May Craig of the *Portland [Maine] Press Herald*) drew appreciative laughter. Nixon took a page from his hero Charles de Gaulle and shifted the meetings to prime time and a grandiose setting within the White House, where they remain. Lyndon Johnson favored certain journalists but was a mediocre performer, and it was during the LBJ years that his natural defensiveness and ponderous evasions—and of course, the Vietnam war—gave birth to press complaints about a “credibility gap.”

In the age of Barack Obama's serial appearances on *The View* and hostile comedians at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner, it is also worth noting that until the last few decades, presidents were almost never interviewed by individual journalists, on television or in print. The world inhabited by Jim Acosta and his preening colleagues, and the eminently baitable Sean Spicer, is not just a new world but practically the opposite of a comparatively recent past.

As always, and especially now, the press is the ocean in which politicians swim, and Spicer and his boss would probably benefit from the wisdom that it is easier, and shrewder, to seduce and manipulate than to antagonize the press. But in this, as in other instances, President Trump is his own worst enemy. That does not mean that Trump's attitude toward the media is unusual, or even perilous to democracy. It's just that presidents and the press tend to identify their own interests with the well-being of the nation, and always have. ♦

A Jihadist Hits the Jackpot

Why did Canada shell out millions to an al Qaeda killer? BY CANDICE MALCOLM

When former president Barack Obama initiated efforts to implement his pledge to close Guantánamo Bay and transfer its detainees to U.S. and foreign prisons, he started a cascade effect that has boosted the global jihadist insurgency. The most recent example of the impact of Obama's foreign policy comes from just across the 49th parallel. On the Fourth of July, news broke that an Obama acolyte—Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau—would offer a historic settlement and official apology to a former Guantánamo Bay inmate. Trudeau's Liberal government secretly awarded C\$10.5 million to Omar Khadr, a man convicted of war crimes and the murder of an American soldier; Guantánamo's youngest detainee is now 30 years old and living in Edmonton, Alberta.

The case of Omar Khadr is as provocative as it is unusual. Khadr was born in Toronto, a Canadian citizen, but his Egyptian-Palestinian family spent most of Khadr's childhood in Pakistan. Khadr was brought up under the guidance of a mother who preferred her children be raised not in Canada but in an al Qaeda training camp and a father intent on grooming his seven children to participate in jihad. The father, Ahmed Said al-Khadr, was a senior al Qaeda officer and financier described by his wife as an "old friend" of Osama bin Laden. The Khadr family once lived in the bin Laden compound, and the

al Qaeda leader himself attended the wedding of the eldest Khadr daughter, Zaynab—an unabashed Islamist who has expressed her own support for the 9/11 mastermind. Another



Omar Khadr in Ontario, July 6

son, Abdurahman Khadr, who took a different path than Omar and has worked with American intelligence agencies, told PBS he grew up "in an al Qaeda family."

By the age of 15, Omar Khadr was in Afghanistan, attending jihadist training camps and meeting with senior al Qaeda figures, including bin Laden. He had taken part in a number of operations meant to kill or injure U.S. forces. He was captured following a gunfight between plain-clothed terrorists and U.S. Delta Force soldiers at an al Qaeda compound near Khost, Afghanistan. After the battle, American army medics were sent in to tend to any survivors, and Khadr threw a grenade that killed one of those medics, Sgt. First Class Christopher Speer. Khadr himself faced life-threatening injuries from gun wounds; he survived only because he was treated by U.S. medics who made it through the firefight.

Khadr was airlifted to Bagram, the largest U.S. military base in Afghanistan, where he received further medical attention and was subject to initial questioning. Here Khadr stated that "he felt happy when he heard he had killed an American" and signed a statement of facts confessing to the murder of Sgt. Speer. Khadr later claimed the confession was the result of torture and coercion, but a military judge ruled that Khadr signed the statement after he learned investigators had found a videotape showing him building IEDs. Khadr was transferred to Guantánamo—his home for the next decade—where he was held, interrogated, and prosecuted in a military tribunal. He was found guilty in 2010 of five counts of war crimes, including the murder of Sgt. Speer.

Rather than letting him serve the 40-year sentence handed down by the military tribunal, however, Khadr's lawyers negotiated a plea deal, and the Obama administration reportedly began pressuring Canada to accept custody of Khadr. Years later, it was revealed through Hillary Clinton's leaked private emails that she and her staff had personally intervened and encouraged Canadian officials to repatriate Khadr.

In 2012, Khadr was transferred to a maximum-security prison in Canada, and by 2015, he was released on bail by the country's notoriously liberal court system. Meanwhile, Khadr and his lawyers had filed a civil lawsuit against the government of Canada, alleging that it had failed to uphold his rights as a Canadian citizen. The country's Supreme Court ruled in 2010 that the Canadian government had indeed infringed upon Khadr's rights when it sent its own interrogators to Guantánamo to question, as the court's opinion put it, "a youth detained without access to counsel, to elicit statements about serious criminal charges while knowing that the youth had been subjected to sleep deprivation and while knowing that the fruits of the interrogations

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would be shared with the prosecutors.” Khadr first sought C\$100,000 in damages in his civil suit; he later raised the amount to C\$20 million. The Supreme Court ruling, however, said nothing about financial compensation, “leaving it to the government to decide how best to respond” and noting that the “remedy sought” by Khadr was “an order that Canada request his repatriation.”

The question therefore remains: Was Trudeau’s Independence Day decision a deliberate provocation and an anti-American gesture or simply an unassuming, if not naïve, attempt to right an extraordinary wrong? The answer to this question depends largely upon one’s view of Omar Khadr. Some see him as a traitor who defected to fight alongside the enemy, an al Qaeda terrorist and a convicted war criminal, while others see a victim, a brainwashed son and a former child soldier.

Those who defend the Trudeau government’s payment to Omar Khadr rely upon two essential propositions. First, they assert, Khadr was a child soldier and should therefore be treated differently from other terrorists captured and detained at Guantánamo. And second, Khadr’s advocates say that his confession and admission of guilt were the result of torture and routine rights violations, and should not be upheld as a true guilty plea.

A close examination of the facts, however, shows that both assertions are myths that do not hold up to basic scrutiny.

The idea that Khadr was a “child soldier” has been repeated so often in the Canadian media, it’s now met without question or skepticism. Courts deal with 15-year-olds all the time, and frequently, these adolescents are tried as adults. In the case of Omar Khadr, the American judicial system deemed that he possessed the mental capacity to be aware of his actions. Khadr knew what he was doing when he persuaded his father to let him fight in Afghanistan, when he built and laid improvised bombs, when he threw the grenade that killed Sgt. Speer, and when he told American

interrogators that he acted “with the specific intent of killing or injuring as many Americans as he could.”

Khadr was tried and convicted of war crimes. While some cry foul, Canadian Constitution Foundation executive director Howard Anglin, who served as deputy chief of staff to former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper, says Khadr’s prosecution is “neither unprecedented nor contrary to international law.” Khadr did not meet the legal definition of child soldier per international law, maintains Anglin, who provided expert testimony in front of a Canadian parliamentary committee discussing Omar Khadr in May 2008. Anglin, acting as a lawyer and a private citizen, testified that “as Mr. Khadr’s own lawyer, Lieutenant Commander Kuebler, has stated, there is nothing in the optional protocol, customary international law, U.S. federal law, or Canadian law that bars the prosecution of a juvenile for war crimes.”

Anglin points out that while most scholars of the subject of child soldiers acknowledge that armed forces should work to prevent individuals under the age of 18 from engaging in combat, and many would decline to prosecute soldiers under the age of 15, nowhere in international law does it say “those between the ages of 15 and 18 can never be soldiers.” Anglin notes that, “for example, the United Kingdom expressly reserved the right to use soldiers under the age of 18 when there was a genuine military need.” Furthermore, these guidelines typically define the rules for recruitment and combat for adolescents in signatory countries. They do not prohibit fighting against adolescent or child soldier enemies who are already in combat, which would be unworkable and impossible.

Khadr was not a child but an adolescent while fighting for al Qaeda in Afghanistan, but it’s worth noting that Khadr was not a soldier either. According to Geneva Convention definitions, al Qaeda does not meet the standard of a legal army and does not operate according to the laws

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and customs of war. Khadr was not a member of an organized militia or recognized armed forces, he was not a uniformed soldier, he was not part of a chain of command, and he did not conduct operations in accordance with the Geneva Convention. In other words, Khadr was an unlawful combatant, a terrorist—and terrorists do not have Geneva rights.

The second prevailing myth about Khadr is that he was tortured during his detention in Guantánamo Bay. According to J.D. Gordon, a former Pentagon spokesman and retired Navy commander familiar with this case, “Omar Khadr was treated humanely at Guantánamo.” Gordon escorted members of NGOs and the media attending Khadr’s military commission hearings at Guantánamo and saw something far more cynical in the works. “His claims of torture were merely ploys to gain sympathy and secure his release—a tactic taken straight out of the Manchester Manual, an al Qaeda training document seized by authorities in the U.K.”

Gordon is not alone in his position that Khadr was not tortured. One of Canada’s top human rights scholars and Trudeau’s predecessor as leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, Michael Ignatieff, defended the methods used in interrogating Khadr at the time. The so-called “frequent flyer program”—which prevented Khadr from sleeping for more than three hours at a time—does not amount to torture, Ignatieff declared. “Permissible duress might include forms of sleep deprivation that do not result in lasting harm to mental or physical health,” he wrote of American enhanced interrogation techniques.

Omar Khadr was considered a “high intelligence value” detainee, according to Guantánamo reports made public through WikiLeaks. Khadr possessed important information in the war against Islamist terror groups. Given his family history, his father’s high-ranking position within al Qaeda, and his own connections to senior terrorists, Khadr was routinely questioned, including using

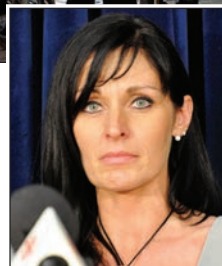
enhanced interrogation methods. No one denies this.

The only court ever to rule on whether Khadr was tortured explicitly found that “there is no credible evidence the accused [Khadr] was ever tortured . . . even using a liberal interpretation considering the accused’s age.”

Khadr and his lawyers concocted a long list of alleged acts of torture committed by American officials, yet Khadr refused to testify in court to describe the alleged assaults against



Above, protesters outside the U.S. consulate in Toronto in 2008; below, Tabitha Speer, widow of a U.S. soldier killed by Khadr.



him. One of these claims, that Khadr was abused during a weigh-in at Guantánamo, was specifically disproven by Judge Patrick J. Parrish. “The accused alleged in his affidavit that he was mistreated while he was being weighed. The videotape of the accused being weighed . . . clearly shows the accused was not abused or mistreated in any way by any of the guards.”

During his years at Guantánamo, Omar Khadr amassed a team of advocates and supporters. He became the poster child for an anti-American, antiwar lobby that seeks to make excuses for and minimize the threat of Islamist terror networks. He has been canonized as a martyr amongst legal and academic circles: the child soldier left to rot at Guantánamo. As emails show, even Hillary Clinton, the

supposed realist in the Obama administration, fell victim to Khadr’s carefully crafted image.

But the true story of Omar Khadr is darker, his deeds more deliberate than his advocates would like the public to believe. While some in Canada call the settlement a polarizing issue—most journalists and academics side with Khadr—a recent Angus Reid poll revealed that an overwhelming 71 percent of Canadians disagree with Trudeau’s decision to compensate Khadr. Elites in Canada may feel conflicted about balancing the rights

of a convicted terrorist with protecting national security in the era of a global jihadist insurgency, but everyday Canadians see the issue more clearly. Khadr was an enemy combatant; he murdered an American soldier; and he possessed useful information about al Qaeda operations. He was treated humanely in Guantánamo, and his repatriation back to Canada in 2012 was frankly more than he deserved.

Instead, he is now C\$10.5 million richer and free to spend this money, except perhaps for lawyers’ fees, however he chooses. (He has indicated he has no intention of paying anything toward the \$134 million judgment against him in a civil suit won by Sgt. Speer’s widow and Sgt. First Class Layne Morris, who lost an eye in the firefight that killed his colleague.) J.D. Gordon says, given Khadr’s upbringing and the family business, don’t be surprised if that includes “stealthily recruiting more jihadists through speaking tours and other activities designed to spread propaganda about America and our allies.”

Upon his release from prison in 2015, Khadr was asked if he would categorically denounce violent jihad. “It’s not something I believe in right now,” said a coy Khadr. *Right now.* The Trudeau government should hope, in the wake of this highly publicized and deeply unpopular cash settlement, that violent jihad is not something Omar Khadr ever revisits.

IMAGES: NEWS.COM

Experimenting on the Young

Juvenile ‘sex reassignment’ and its risks.

BY KATHERINE KERSTEN

Minneapolis

Raising kids is the ultimate hands-on project. If your teen-aged son tells you he plans to text while driving, for example, your job is to set him straight on the facts and consequences—to help him face reality.

But in Minnesota in 2017, there’s one exception: If your boy declares he thinks he’s a girl, powerful social forces dictate that you must raise no objections, swallow hard, and get ready to enthusiastically support his “gender transition.”

Today, a youth transgender craze is sweeping the nation, and the elites here in my state are fully on board. The Minnesota Department of Education, the State High School League, and Gov. Mark Dayton heartily embrace it. The Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools have policies allowing students to use the bathrooms, locker rooms, and showers of the opposite sex. Meanwhile, a Twin Cities organization called “Transforming Families” announced last year that its youngest transgender support group—for kids ages 4 through 8—has about 25 members.

Affirmation of “gender transitions” by young people is the new litmus test of enlightened, progressive thinking. But it has a dark underside: chemical and surgical experimentation on children, with unknown consequences that may haunt those young people and our society for decades.

A few years ago, there were only a handful of pediatric “gender clinics”

in the country. Today, there are at least 40. What’s happened? Activists have successfully reframed as a civil rights issue a condition previously viewed as a disorder. To express skepticism about a child’s self-diagnosis as transgender is now to risk being branded a hateful bigot. Medical professionals who do so may face career-ending persecution.

This newly dominant civil rights narrative obscures both the scientific facts and medical risks that young people will face if they go down the “gender transition” road. Here’s the fundamental problem: The claim that a human being can change his or her sex is “starkly, nakedly false,” according to Dr. Paul McHugh, who served for 26 years as psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

Every cell in the human body identifies individuals as either male or female, with males having an XY and females an XX chromosome. Transgender advocates like to claim that “gender” is “assigned at birth.” In fact, sex is an anatomical reality “assigned” when a baby is in the womb.

Young people who are clinically impaired because they feel significant incongruence with their biological sex suffer from a condition known as “gender dysphoria.” Increasingly, children who suffer from gender dysphoria “come to their ideas about their sex” through psychosocial “conflicts over the prospects, expectations, and roles that they sense are attached to their given sex—and presume that sex reassignment will ease or resolve them,” says McHugh. For example, a boy whose father has abandoned him or a girl who has seen females abused may come to believe that life would be

better as a member of the opposite sex.

Until recently, the standard treatment for pediatric gender dysphoria was “watchful waiting” and family talk therapy focused on issues that might underlie patients’ misperception of reality. This made sense, because the vast majority of young people outgrow this condition by the end of adolescence.

But in 2007, Dr. Norman Spack of Boston Children’s Hospital introduced to the United States a radical new treatment protocol that originated in the Netherlands. Its premise—rooted in ideology, not science—was that young people who are unhappy with their sexed bodies should be affirmed in their desire to live as the opposite sex.

Children who choose “gender transition” begin a process that renders them dependent on the medical system for life. They are given puberty blockers at around age 12 and cross-sex hormones—estrogen for boys and testosterone for girls—at age 16 or so.

Cross-sex hormones increase superficial resemblance to the opposite sex by stimulating the development of secondary sex characteristics, such as facial hair in females and breast tissue in males. Many of the changes that result cease if hormone use ends, but some—such as changes in facial and body hair and balding in women—never go away.

An increasing number of young people go on to “sex reassignment” surgery. This can include amputation of healthy body parts—including double mastectomies for girls as young as 16, and removing or creating “penises” and “vaginas.”

The medical risks of hormone-related treatment are significant. For example, puberty blockers stunt growth during use and may also decrease bone density. Girls who use testosterone may develop severe acne and have trouble with mood swings, anger, and aggression.

One of the most serious risks is lifelong infertility. Permanent sterility is likely when puberty blockers in early adolescence are followed by cross-sex hormones, according to “Growing

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Pains: Problems with Puberty Suppression in Treating Gender Dysphoria,” a report by McHugh and two other physicians, Paul Hruz and Lawrence Mayer, that appeared in the spring 2017 *New Atlantis*. Pediatric gender clinics like the one at Seattle Children’s Hospital caution postpubertal adolescents to consider freezing their eggs or sperm before hormone use, if they may someday want a biological child.

The effects over time of hormone use on children’s development are unknown. In addition, young people who take these hormones will need lifelong monitoring for dangerous side effects, including cancer, liver damage, diabetes, stroke, and heart attack. For example, a consent form used by Fenway Health, an LGBT medical facility in Boston, warns that “the long term effects” of testosterone use by females have “not been scientifically studied and are impossible to predict.”

Today, doctors hesitate to give estrogen treatments to postmenopausal women or testosterone to young male athletes because of documented dangers. Nevertheless, some physicians now dispense powerful cross-sex hormones to young people because they wish to resemble the opposite sex. In our state, the University of Minnesota’s Program in Human Sexuality provides hormone treatment to “gender creative” adolescents and surgical referrals for “young adults.”

In short: The use of sex-reassignment treatments in children amounts to a massive, uncontrolled experiment. Vulnerable children are being encouraged by activists to make irreversible, life-changing decisions at an age when many states bar them from getting a tattoo or using a tanning bed.

Influential adults in medical, educational, and media settings are encouraging troubled children to attribute their personal problems to being transgender. At the same time, gender transition has become a kind of fashion statement in social media.

The last few years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of young people complaining of gender dysphoria. Britain’s Gender Identity Development Service, to cite one striking example, reports a 2,000 percent increase of referrals of children under 18 between 2009-10 and 2016-17.

Two major factors appear to be driving the dramatic increase in gender dysphoria in young people. Influential adults in medical, educational,

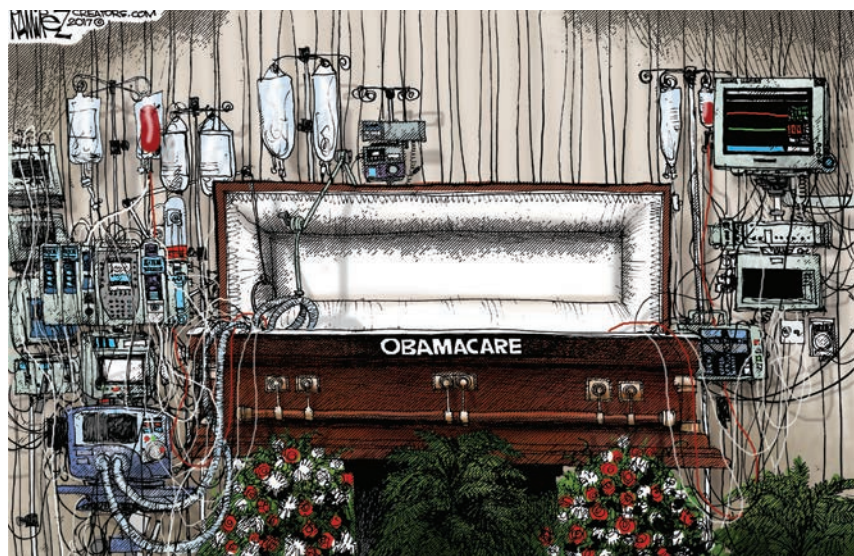
and media settings are encouraging troubled children to attribute their personal problems to being transgender. At the same time, gender transition has become a kind of fashion statement in social media.

In Minnesota, as elsewhere around the United States, state education officials are fueling the explosion. Here, the Department of Education is pushing a “transgender toolkit” and urging K-12 schools to adopt the policies it recommends, insinuating that schools that don’t could face legal problems.

The toolkit states that “transgender and gender nonconforming students” should be treated as the gender they identify with, in terms of bathroom and locker room use, participation on athletic teams, overnight accommodations during school trips, pronoun use, dress codes, and school records. It goes on to assert that a “family’s acceptance . . . of their child’s gender identity is strongly associated with positive mental health,” and implies—chillingly—that if parents are judged to be insufficiently supportive, “the school support team should follow their protocol for reporting child neglect or harm.”

As a result of ideological strong-arming like this, it is increasingly difficult for children to find the help they need to address the mental health problems that may underlie their gender confusion. Activists have succeeded in portraying the evaluation of alternative explanations as questioning a child’s “true identity.” As one therapist has put it, in no other field is the self-diagnosis of a 10-year-old to be taken seriously.

The costs of our extraordinary experiment in juvenile “sex reassignment” will become increasingly evident. Some young people are already attempting to “de-transition” from life-altering medical treatments they now regret. In the end, however, it may take a raft of lawsuits over damaging side effects like lifelong infertility to prompt rethinking of the children’s gender identity crusade now underway. ♦



The Myths of 1953

Newly declassified documents reveal the CIA to have been mostly a bystander in the Iranian coup

By RAY TAKEYH

William Faulkner once mused that the past is never dead, in fact it's not even past. The story of the coup that toppled Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq in 1953 may not be dead, but it is unhinged from history. Tall tales by a scion of the American establishment—former CIA agent and presidential grandson Kermit Roosevelt—and reams of studies by left-wing professors have sustained the myth that the Eisenhower administration ousted Mossadeq. The Iranians are mere bystanders in this story, watching helplessly as a malevolent America manipulates their nation's destiny. Most academic speculations remain cloistered in college campuses, but the myth of Mossadeq's overthrow long escaped those boundaries.

It is in the Democratic party that the tale of Mossadeq's demise has found its most hospitable home. In 2015, Barack Obama confided to Tom Friedman, "if you look at Iranian history, the fact is that we had some involvement with overthrowing a democratically elected regime in Iran." In her memoir *Hard Choices*, Hillary Clinton echoed this theme: "The country's monarch, the Shah, owed his throne to a 1953 coup supported by the Eisenhower administration against a democratically-elected government thought to be sympathetic to Communism." And in 2000, in the midst of her general apology to Iran for America's past misdeeds, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright highlighted the coup, stressing, "it is easy to see

now why many Iranians continue to resent this intervention by America in their internal affairs." If a little history is a dangerous thing, in the hands of Democratic party luminaries, it is quite lethal.

Last month, the State Department finally released a cache of documents that John Kerry had embargoed as he pursued his arms control ambitions with Iran. It is unlikely that the former secretary of state actually read the documents, but always mindful of the mullahs' sensibilities, he chose to suppress history in the name of diplomacy.

Those skeptical of the standard account of the coup will find in the files more evidence that the mythmakers were wrong. The newly declassified records provide valuable insight into the confused atmosphere that permeated the U.S. intelligence community that fateful summer. It is hard to read these cables and come to the conclusion that America overthrew Mossadeq.

The proper place to begin is a brief recapitulation of the crisis. For decades, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) had exploited Iran's oil, paying less revenue to Tehran than taxes to the British treasury. The rise of postcolonial nationalism in the aftermath of World War II made

such anachronistic arrangements untenable. As the European empires crumbled, their assets became fair game for the newly independent nations. Mohammad Mossadeq was one of Iran's more esteemed politicians, having fought his entire life for his country's autonomy and dignity. As a parliamentarian, he spearheaded the nationalization of Iran's oil in 1951. Soon after the passage of the bill, the shah had no choice but to promote its champion to the premiership. It is important to note that Mossadeq was a nationalist who once believed in constitutionalism and the rule of law. Had his career ended in parliament, he would be remembered



Mohammad Mossadeq speaks in Tehran during the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company dispute, September 27, 1951.

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as one of Persia's greatest patriots. The tragedy of Mossadeq is that he became prime minister, a post unsuited to his temperament.

Mossadeq's intransigence made a negotiated settlement nearly impossible. The prime minister and his allies dismissed compromises that would preserve any aspect of British power. As Mossadeq informed a startled American envoy, Henry Grady, "I assure, you, Excellency, that we value independence more than economics." The new premier castigated AIOC for plundering Iran, manipulating its domestic politics, corrupting its elite, and deforming its society. In essence, Mossadeq saw the nationalization as an act of liberation. Once diplomacy is infused with such evangelical spirit, technical agreements and profit-sharing schemes are overwhelmed by a cry for emancipation.

Even at the height of the Cold War, the Truman administration played the role of an honest broker. This was not the first time that Harry Truman had saved Iran. In 1946, when Joseph Stalin planned to take over the northern Iranian province of Azerbaijan, it was Truman who rebuffed the Soviet dictator. The map of Iran might well look different today had America not stood up for Iran's sovereign rights at the risk of precipitating the Cold War's first crisis. America's stellar diplomats such as Dean Acheson and Averell Harriman devised innumerable schemes that conceded the principle of Iranian nationalization while compensating Britain for its confiscated assets. It was Tehran, more than London, that brushed aside all such arrangements.

The pressure of governing during a time of crisis accentuated the darker shades of Mossadeq's personality. The onetime champion of the rule of law now rigged elections and unleashed crowds to intimidate his political opponents. Mossadeq's most important target was the monarchy, an institution he relentlessly sought to hollow out. The premier appreciated that to weaken the monarchy he had to wrestle away its control of the armed forces. He purged pro-shah officers, sought to gain control of the Ministry of War, and even tried to prevent the

monarch from having contact with his officers. In the oil negotiations, Mossadeq hardly took into account the shah's ideas and concerns.

Even before Western intelligence services devised plots against Mossadeq, his party the National Front started to crumble. The middle-class elements of the coalition, anxious about their declining economic fortunes, gradually looked for an alternative to the premier. The once-reliable intelligentsia and the professional classes were chafing

under Mossadeq's authoritarianism. A number of smaller political parties that had been associated with his movement were also contemplating their exit. Even more ominous, the armed forces, which had stayed quiet despite Mossadeq's purges, grew vocal and began to participate in political intrigues.

Among Iran's factions, the clergy would play the most curious role. As it has with most historical events, the Islamic Republic has whitewashed the role that the mullahs played in Mossadeq's downfall. The most esteemed Shia cleric at that time,

Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Hossein Borujerdi, initially supported the nationalization act and encouraged the shah to oppose Britain's imperial designs. The National Front's liberal disposition, however, unsettled the clerical order. At the outset of its rule, the party stood for redistributing land, female franchise, and constructing a modern educational system. The oil crisis may have pushed aside such reformist tendencies but did not diminish clerical suspicion. As large landowners, the mullahs distrusted governments prone to carving out their property. As reactionaries, they disdained female equality in all its forms. And as guardians of tradition, they were averse to modernization of Iran's educational sector.

Still, it was the mayhem on the streets rather than the National Front's legislative goals that most disturbed the clerical class in the summer of 1953. They feared that continuing disorder would empower the Communist Tudeh party and might even lead to displacement of the monarchy by a radical leftist regime. The clerical oligarchs were comfortable with the deferential shah and soon began to shift



Averell Harriman, left, and an interpreter with Mohammad Mossadeq at the Iranian's home; below, Ayatollah Kashani in 1951



their allegiances. The rabble rouser Ayatollah Abdel Qassem Kashani might have led the charge against Mossadeq from his perch as the speaker of parliament, but behind him stood a clerical cohort antagonistic to the prime minister. Iran's rulers today should not be granted their claim that the seminary had no role in Mossadeq's overthrow.

By 1953, America had a new president, the victor of the Second World War, Dwight Eisenhower. Despite perceptions that he was a trigger-happy cold warrior, Eisenhower appreciated the arrival of Third World nationalism as a force in global politics and he was sophisticated enough to recognize the difference between neutrality and communism. Given the gravity of the situation, he soon grew concerned that Mossadeq's unfolding dictatorship of the left could easily slide into Communist rule. Mossadeq had rejected a string of settlement proposals and was not even superficially interested in negotiations. In the meantime, Iran's domestic stability continued to deteriorate, empowering radical forces on both the left and the right.

The recently released documents highlight the dilemmas that Eisenhower faced in Iran. America's formidable ambassador Loy Henderson warned the White House, "During [the] last six months there has been sharp shift in basis [of] Mossadeq support among political leaders. Most elements [of the] original National [Front] movement now (repeat now) [are] in open or tacit opposition." Henderson noted that Mossadeq's "frequent use of mass demonstrations in order [to] bring pressure on opposition, his inability [to] obtain [the] cooperation [of] outstanding political leaders [of the] country, and his resort [to] military law [to] maintain order have served [to] weaken his popularity even among [the] masses."

It was hard to see how Eisenhower could take advantage of Mossadeq's mishaps, however, when he was informed by his intelligence services that the "CIA presently has no group which would be effective in spreading anti-Mossadeq mass propaganda" and the "CIA has no group in Iran which could effectively promote riots demonstrating against Mossadeq." In the fabled history of the coup, from such incapacity the CIA developed a resilient network that easily toppled a popular leader a few months later.

The idea of a coup was relentlessly promoted by aggrieved Iranian politicians who believed that Mossadeq's disastrous course was ill-serving their country. General Fazlullah Zahedi, a distinguished soldier and onetime

member of Mossadeq's cabinet, became the focal point of resistance. Zahedi confirmed the embassy's view that a nascent anti-Mossadeq coalition already existed and could gain power with limited American support. It was the Iranians, more than the CIA, who initially offered Eisenhower a path out of his predicament.

The newly declassified documents shed much light on the role that the clergy played. Most scholars of the coup have long acknowledged that Kashani was involved in opposition activities. Given his reputation for self-promotion and corruption, however, it was easy to cordon off the disreputable Kashani from the seminaries. Somehow, he was the lone cleric plotting against Mossadeq while his more esteemed colleagues kept their distance from the royalists. Borujerdi's public silence is seen as an indication that the venerable Shia cleric disapproved of the plots



Soldiers chase rioters in Tehran during the civil unrest of August 1953.

against Mossadeq. In an intriguing cable, the CIA noted that Zahedi reported that "Kashani, Borujerdi and [Ayatollah Muhammad Reza] Behbahani were reaching an understanding on the need to bolster the Shah in resistance to Mossadeq." The CIA station in Tehran similarly stated that when approached by two clerics serving as members of parliament (in Iran the body is called the Majlis), "Borujerdi is alleged to have instructed them to form a religious faction within the Majlis." Before the 1979 revolution, clerical involvement in politics was subtle, with carefully orchestrated signals whose impact was nonetheless significant. Far from being a passive observer, the priestly class seemed to have made its preferences clear.

By April, we see that the basic elements of the coup were in place largely independent of American participation. The CIA reported that "court representative attempted to enlist Mullah Kashani's support of [a] plan." The plan was essentially for the shah to sack Mossadeq in favor of

Zahedi. This was hardly an intricate plot, as the shah had the authority to dismiss his premier, whose miscalculations had already eroded his popular standing. The street power of the mullahs could also be used, as the mosque could still mobilize a crowd on short notice. The problem that the plotters confronted was that the shah was a weak and indecisive person who wanted Mossadeq ousted without his active participation.

The Iranian planning and pleading finally pressed Washington to be more directly involved in the plot to unseat Mossadeq. Roosevelt went to Iran to oversee the operation, code-named the TPAJAX Project or Operation Ajax. The scheme concocted with the participation of Britain's MI6 rested on the shah dismissing his prime minister. A series of emissaries, including the shah's feisty sister, were smuggled into the palace to stiffen up the diffident monarch. A crude propaganda campaign was also launched that absurdly accused Mossadeq of being of Jewish ancestry. The CIA would seek to rekindle Britain's network of agents to instigate crowds only to realize that London had overstated their value. Zahedi emerged as the centerpiece of the campaign given his stature in the armed forces.

The coup was finally launched on August 13 when the shah issued a decree dismissing his premier. It was an inauspicious start, as the day before the coup, the National Intelligence Estimate, expressing the collective judgment of all U.S. spy agencies, proclaimed, "As a general proposition, we believe that the odds still favor Mossadeq's retention of power at least through 1953." Mossadeq seemed to have been tipped off about the shah's decision and quickly arrested the officer dispatched to dismiss him. The shah, true to form, fled the country. It is important to stress that the prime minister's defiance of the shah's decree was unconstitutional. The many defenders of Mossadeq's "democratically elected" government rarely mention that his continuation in power at this point was illegal.

After the failure of the coup, a mood of resignation

descended on Washington. The State Department acknowledged that the "operation has been tried and failed." The CIA warned its station in Iran that "we should not participate in any operation against Mossadeq which could be traced back to US and further compromise our relations with him which may become [the] only course of action left open to US." Eisenhower's close aide and confidant the crusty General Walter Bedell Smith, who had been director of central intelligence until becoming under secretary of state in February 1953, had the unenviable task of apprising

his boss. He summed up the evaluation of all the relevant agencies and told a glum president that "the move failed. . . . We now have to take a whole new look at the Iranian situation and probably have to snuggle up to Mossadeq, if we're going to save anything there." Among the newly released documents is an after-action assessment by the CIA's Office of National Estimates that stressed, "Mossadeq's numerous non-Communist opponents have been dealt an almost crippling blow and may never again be in a position to make a serious attempt to overthrow him." For the United States, the coup was over.

The purveyors of the traditional narrative of the coup chose to ignore all this and insist that despite the sour mood in Washing-

ton, Kermit Roosevelt persisted and eventually succeeded in overthrowing Mossadeq. This account is based largely on Roosevelt's sensationalist book, *Countercoup: The Struggle for Control of Iran*. But the book is the product of Roosevelt's exaggerated imagination and does much to embellish his role at the expense of describing the actual course of events. The fact is that the second—successful—coup was largely an Iranian initiative. The CIA station in Iran continued its reporting activities and was involved in disseminating the shah's decree dismissing Mossadeq. But it is hardly a nefarious act to publicize a legal ruling by a monarch discharging his prime minister.

In the chaotic and confused atmosphere of Tehran, political fortunes swiftly changed. By August 19, the



A portrait of the shah is hoisted atop an Iranian Army tank patrolling the streets of Tehran after Mossadeq's ouster in August 1953.

second coup began. Zahedi continued to keep in touch with the military contingents under his command and sought to bring in additional army units from surrounding areas. The street protests persisted, some instigated by Kashani and the mullahs while others generated spontaneously. The Tudeh seemed to have overplayed its hand, as its cadre took to the streets waving Communist banners and calling for “people’s democracy.” As the events rapidly unfolded, the CIA station reported that the “Army [is] still basically [with the] Shah” and “Religious leaders now desperate. Will attempt anything. Will try [to] save Islam and Shah of Iran.” Far from being in command of the situation, the agency’s representatives in Tehran cabled that as of August 13, “CIA cut out of military preparations by [General Nader] Batmangeliche and Zahedi.”

Despite his usurpations of power, Mossadeq remained a man of his class and was disturbed by the violence engulfing the cities. The military that was dispatched to suppress the riots was still the shah’s army. Once the armed contingents entered Tehran, they quickly turned their focus on government offices and eventually the prime minister’s residence. Zahedi and his men had planned well and were in position to take over key facilities with dispatch. Mossadeq was too much of an aristocrat to spend his life in hideaways and soon surrendered to Zahedi’s forces. Thus ended Mohammad Mossadeq’s tumultuous tenure.

In Washington, the shock of the royalist restoration triggered calls for reports from the local officials. Ambassador Henderson, in his role as the United States’ chief representative in Iran, informed the White House that the protesters “seemed to come from all classes of people including workers, clerks, shopkeepers, students, et cetera.” This stands in stark contrast to professors and pundits who insist that the demonstrations were mere collections of thugs paid by the CIA and its accomplices. For his part, Henderson noticed that “not only members [of] Mossadeq’s regime but also pro-Shah supporters [were] amazed at the latter’s comparatively speedy and easy initial victory which was achieved with high degree of spontaneity.” It seems that the Iranian public had grown weary of Mossadeq’s inability to resolve the oil crisis and his persistent power-grabs.

The newly declassified documents do much to undermine Roosevelt’s later tales. The CIA station in Tehran echoed Henderson’s assessment and noted, “The Royalist, pro-Zahedi movement of August 19th contained a large element of spontaneity and there seemed to have been a genuine reaction of shock and dismay on part of the Tehran populace when the Shah left Iran for Iraq.” Armed with the judgment of his field agents, CIA acting director Charles Cabell—Allen Dulles was on vacation and did not see a reason to disrupt his holiday and return to Washington—informed Eisenhower that “an unexpected strong upsurge of popular and military reaction to Prime Minister Mossadeq’s government has resulted according to late dispatches from Tehran in the virtual occupation of

that city by forces proclaiming their loyalty to the Shah, and to his appointed Prime Minister Zahedi.” Although the official documents do not record the president’s reaction, Eisenhower must have smiled at his unexpectedly good fortune.

In August 1953, the Iranians reclaimed their nation and ousted a premier who had generated too many crises that he could not resolve. The institution of the monarchy was still held in esteem by a large swath of the public. And the shah commanded the support of all the relevant classes, such as the military and the clergy.

Mossadeq’s unpopularity and penchant toward arbitrary rule had left him isolated and vulnerable to a popular revolt. America might have been involved in the first coup attempt that failed, but it was largely a bystander in the more consequential second one. Although Kermit Roosevelt would go on to inflate his role, the other American diplomats and spies should be credited for the integrity of their reports and the acknowledgment of their own surprise at the turn of events.

It is unlikely that the professoriate and the American left will abandon their myths about 1953. They are too invested in their narrative and too obsessed with defending the Islamic Republic to defer to history’s judgment. The clerical complicity in the demise of Mossadeq is sure to embarrass the theocratic regime that has gained much from Roosevelt’s legendary story. The documentary disclosures and declassifications may not nudge the left in the right direction, but for those with an open mind, the case is now closed. ♦



Mossadeq leaving prison in Tehran in 1956. The deposed prime minister had been sentenced to three years for treason.

Ticked Off

The Lyme activists win one—maybe

BY BENJAMIN PARKER

In December 2016, President Obama signed into law the 21st Century Cures Act, which contained a laundry list of regulatory reforms and new funding. One of the most controversial sections wasn't about cancer, Alzheimer's, AIDS, or drug prices. It was about Lyme disease.

Lyme attacks the nervous system, and left untreated it can lead to paralysis, encephalitis, seizures, and death. It's among the fastest growing diseases and can now be found in half of all American counties and on four continents. The response to the disease by the federal government has been a textbook failure of politics.

The tick-borne bacterial infection, named for Old Lyme, Connecticut, where it was first diagnosed, is the subject of a pitched legislative battle—one that cuts across party lines. As in any battle, the fog of war is considerable. Lyme was first identified in 1975, making it a youngster next to bacterial infections like tuberculosis or syphilis. Even though some 300,000 Americans contract Lyme every year, comparatively little is known about it.

The procedure for diagnosing Lyme is iffy at best. It was long thought that Lyme patients always had a bull's-eye-shaped rash at the spot of the tick bite. Later research suggested the rash occurs only in some cases, with estimates ranging from 30 to 80 percent.

Without the telltale rash, Lyme symptoms are hard to pin down. They include fever, fatigue, body aches, joint pain, and stiffness. They're often labeled "flu-like." Plug them into WebMD, and Lyme is just one of 99 different diseases and disorders ranging from hepatitis to dementia to "exercise or physical activity" that cause similar symptoms. Some patients spend years with the disease, bouncing from specialist to specialist (including psychiatrists) before receiving a Lyme diagnosis. In the midst of the political battle over Lyme, everyone agrees that educating physicians about how to spot the disease is crucial.

Even if Lyme is suspected, an accurate diagnosis is far from assured. The standard two-part blood test aims to detect the antibodies the body produces to fight the

infection. Antibodies mean infection; no antibodies means no infection. At least, so goes the theory.

After a tick introduces the Lyme bacterium into the body, the immune system can take weeks to respond. The Centers for Disease Control is confident that "several weeks after infection . . . two-tier testing [has] very good sensitivity." They don't mention exactly how long "several weeks" is, and the recommendation to wait a month or so before testing is less than reassuring.

Still, with a positive diagnosis in hand, "patients treated with antibiotics in the early stages of the infection usually recover rapidly and completely." Usually.

The controversy arises in the other cases. Some patients, especially those who don't receive early treatment due to false-negative test results, develop more serious symptoms: muscle cramps and spasms, nausea and vomiting, seizures, memory loss, cognitive difficulty, and heart palpitations. Even after the recommended two to four weeks of follow-up antibiotics, symptoms can persist and worsen. The

CDC and the National Institutes of Health refer to this as post-treatment Lyme disease syndrome (PLDS).

Many patients and some physicians call it chronic Lyme disease.

The difference is important. The CDC is sure that four weeks of antibiotics are the absolute maximum necessary to defeat the infection and that PLDS is just the result of damage already done by the bacteria. Further treatment with antibiotics, they caution, provides no long-term benefit and poses major risks, both to patients and to public health.

Long-term antibiotic treatments are serious medical procedures. Powerful, intravenous drugs require a peripherally inserted central catheter or PICC—a tube inserted in an arm vein that connects a port on the inside of the elbow almost all the way to the heart. The risks of infection, blood clots, and tissue damage are serious. The antibiotics can suppress the immune system, sometimes requiring more IV treatments of immune-boosting drugs.

Using antibiotics in such doses and for such a common disease can pose general risks as well. Not without reason, public health experts are concerned that the overuse of antibiotics could create new strains of bacteria that are super-resistant to existing antibiotics. They also worry about patients who are misdiagnosed with chronic Lyme, but in



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JIM GATHANY

fact have other ailments like subtle cancers that don't receive necessary treatment.

Some doctors and patients, on the other hand, report near-miraculous results with long-term treatment. Despite the risks, a friend of mine with Lyme who's had three PICCs for a cumulative total of 19 months still defends the treatment: "Having a PICC line put in is obviously very inconvenient and scary, but it's worlds better than having seizures, memory loss, and inability to walk, talk, or feed yourself."

Another Lyme patient I know was more than 50 pounds under his normal weight before getting a Lyme diagnosis and a PICC. While it didn't reduce all his symptoms, it did allow him to regain a healthy body weight. According to a family member, "he would see 60 to 70 pound fluctuations when going on and off the antibiotics in pretty short amounts of time" even though "he had been eating and exercising the same way. No major lifestyle changes to attribute it to, the only thing that changed was whether or not he was getting medication to fight the infection."

The CDC is, perhaps understandably, wary of anecdotes like these. One study of long-term antibiotics conducted by NIH found that 30 days of IV antibiotics had no effect. Some patients criticize the study, reporting that their symptoms eased only after longer periods of treatment. The CDC maintains that it will change its position if the literature is convincing. The CDC's critics claim that the latest research has already passed that point and CDC isn't responding.

As with so many other modern political fights, both regulators and interest groups come armed with competing sets of facts and reasons for disbelieving the other side. Lyme patients, often desperate for help, sometimes turn to suspect practitioners. Dr. QingCai Zhang, a New York-based specialist in "modern Chinese medicine," claims "modern Chinese herbal treatment with supplemental acupuncture applied to Lyme disease . . . yields a much better clinical outcome than the conventional stand-alone antibiotics approach." His clinic also offers "modern Chinese" remedies for hepatitis, liver fibrosis, and cancer. The M.D.s and Ph.D.s at the CDC could be excused for being wary of second-guessing by acupuncturists.

Instead, the CDC has relied on more established experts. In the words of the agency's chief of epidemiology and surveillance Dr. Paul Mead, the agency has "partnered with" the Infectious Disease Society of America (IDSA), a consortium of physicians and scientists, to define the scientific consensus on myriad diseases, including Lyme. The CDC has maintained relationships with the IDSA and other professional organizations for "quite a number of years," including combining staffs with the IDSA to write Lyme treatment guidelines in 1996. (The IDSA did not respond to a request for comment on its relationship with the CDC.)

That partnership does not reflect favorably on the government. A 2008 investigation by then-attorney general of Connecticut Richard Blumenthal found that a panel convened by the IDSA in 2006 (this time without direct involvement by the CDC) to rewrite the Lyme treatment guidelines was riddled with conflicts of interest and scientific double-dealing. The investigation has been praised by Republican politicians like Rep. Chris Smith of New Jersey, co-chairman of the Congressional Lyme Caucus.

When one member of the panel disagreed with the majority and endorsed a view that chronic Lyme may be treated with long-term antibiotics, he was first pressured to change his mind and then dismissed from the panel. Other scientists skeptical of the orthodoxy petitioned to join the panel but were told there were no seats available. Later, the group expanded to include new members, all of whom toed the line.

The chairman of the panel was simultaneously chairing a committee writing similar Lyme guidelines for the American Academy of Neurology. Other panel members also sat on both bodies. Each committee cited the other group's guidelines to corroborate its own, despite the fact that they were being written by some of the same people at the same time.

A new IDSA panel was convened in 2010 to revisit the issue free of ethical entanglements, this time with an ombudsman appointed by Blumenthal. While the new panel recommended a few dozen changes to the guidelines, the overall conclusion was the same: Chronic Lyme disease does not exist, and the risks of IV antibiotics outweigh any incidental benefits. These guidelines were posted in 2011 to the National Guidelines Clearinghouse, an HHS-run resource for doctors to find best practices for how to treat a wide range of diseases.



A Lyme disease patient since 1996, Susan Coleman Morse of Bloomington, Indiana, prepares an IV with antibiotics, 2014.

The clearinghouse has a five-year limit on guidelines, so IDSA's 2011 posting expired last year. A competitor group, the International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society, submitted its own guidelines recommending long-term antibiotics for chronic Lyme. These are the only guidelines currently available on the clearinghouse, pending IDSA's update.

Even so, the official CDC position holds that the "IDSA Lyme disease guidelines . . . continue to provide comprehensive, accurate information that patients can use in their health care decisions." The CDC also continues to throw cold water on the idea of chronic Lyme: "It is not uncommon for patients treated for Lyme disease with a recommended 2 to 4 week course of antibiotics to have lingering symptoms of fatigue, pain, or joint and muscle aches at the time they finish treatment. In a small percentage of cases, these symptoms can last for more than 6 months. These symptoms cannot be cured by longer courses of antibiotics, but they generally improve on their own, over time."

According to Dr. Mead, just because the ILADS guidelines are posted on the clearinghouse doesn't mean they have the government's imprimatur, and just because IDSA's guidelines have expired doesn't mean the research supporting them isn't sound.

Between acupuncture peddlers on one side and embarrassing corner-cutting on the other, there's more than enough suspicion to go around. To make matters worse, there's money involved. The oral antibiotics the CDC recommends are substantially cheaper than the IV drugs some physicians prescribe for chronic Lyme. Insurance companies, already under stress, take advantage of the scientific uncertainty to deny coverage for the more expensive treatments. Tennessee Blue Cross/Blue Shield, as one example, considers long-term antibiotics "not medically necessary." Most of their citations for that claim are from the CDC, NIH, and IDSA.

The CDC and NIH are committed to their findings, and patients struggle to find the care many see as their only hope. Patients and their advocacy groups turned to legislative action decades ago and found some success in statehouses. Last year was the first time they managed to get legislation through Congress, but the language has generated more controversy than it resolved.

As the 21st Century Cures Act worked its way through the lame-duck session at the end of 2016, Rep. Chris Gibson, a New York Republican, and Rep. Chris Smith saw a perfect opportunity to try to break the Lyme impasse. Along with former congressman Frank Wolf, they had been pushing a

Lyme bill for years, trying to shoehorn the language into defense authorizations, the farm bill, NIH appropriations, and even a bill in the Foreign Affairs Committee. All their efforts were fruitless. Before his retirement in January, Gibson had managed to get the Tick-Borne Disease Research Accountability and Transparency Act through the House in 2014—though that's as far as it got. Rep. Smith remarked that Congress's response to Lyme had been "a deaf ear and a jaundiced eye."

Back in the 1990s, Smith began a career-long push to get emerging diseases and disorders on the congressional agenda. A bill he and Gibson championed established the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee in 1998, which brings together private and public experts to coordinate and advise all HHS policies relating to autism.

They tried to set up a similar committee for Lyme disease at the same time, but that failed. It would fail again repeatedly before passing as part of the 21st Century Cures Act last year. The Lyme language—which establishes an Interagency Lyme and Tick-Borne Diseases Working Group made up of federal agencies, patients, and physicians—was added to the bill while it was still in committee.

The chairman of the committee, Fred Upton, was supportive of the language, but ranking member Frank Pallone was opposed. After receiving a

letter from a slew of fellow Democrats supporting the language, Pallone dropped his opposition in committee. Pallone was the lead Democrat from the House in negotiations with the Senate committee working on the bill. When the talks finished and the negotiators reported their agreements back to their respective chambers, the language had changed. The original draft had required "a diversity of scientific perspectives" on the working group; the bill that was reported back contained no such assurance.

Who made the change is still unknown. There's a possibility it could have been Pallone. In the 2016 cycle, Pallone's campaign and PAC received \$30,000 (his second-largest overall donation) from Blue Cross/Blue Shield, which has a financial interest in maintaining the status quo policy against long-term antibiotics. (His office did not respond to repeated requests for comment.)

It was late in the year, and the new Congress would take over in January. With just 48 hours between the end of negotiations and the final vote, the Lyme advocacy groups, which can be fractious and prone to infighting, scrambled to formulate a coherent response. Some were focused on trying to restore the diversity guarantee, but with the clock

Between acupuncture peddlers on one side and embarrassing corner-cutting on the other, there's more than enough suspicion to go around in the fight over Lyme disease protocols. To make matters worse, there's money involved.



A protester places signs near the Capitol, May 19, 2016.

ticking, other groups thought it safer to try to kill the bill. Without the diversity guarantee, the working group, which they considered their best hope to break the scientific gridlock, would become the latest way of boxing patients and their physicians out of policy-making.

One of the most prominent of these advocacy groups is the Lyme Disease Association, whose president, Pat Smith, is a matriarch of the Lyme patient community. Her first experience with Lyme came more than 30 years ago, when she was on her local school board in New Jersey. As more and more students fell ill, she pushed for Lyme education programs to teach students how to avoid ticks. Two of her daughters were later diagnosed with Lyme, requiring years of treatment.

Smith spent many of those 48 hours on the phone with everyone and anyone on Capitol Hill that would listen to her. Also trying to coordinate a response was the National Capital Lyme Disease Association, which focuses more than any other advocacy group on legislation.

Though they had spent decades pushing for Congress to address Lyme disease, and most of a year pushing for the Lyme provision in the 21st Century Cures Act specifically, they now found themselves in a corner. They were trying to corral the Iowa Lyme Disease Association, the Michigan Lyme Disease Association, TickTexas.org, the May-Day Project, and LymeDisease.org (formerly the California Lyme Disease Association). Getting Texans and Californians to agree on anything is tough; getting them to agree on

major legislation within 48 hours was seemingly impossible.

The details are murky, but somehow, someone got Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy involved. He personally intervened, ensuring the diversity guarantee was put back in the bill before it passed. President Obama signed the law on December 13, 2016, with the diversity guarantee included. For the Lyme groups, the immediate crisis had been averted, but victory was far from assured.

Every member of the working group—whether from within the government or not—is appointed by the secretary of health and human services, Dr. Tom Price. Ensuring that “diverse scientific viewpoints” actually end up on the panel depends solely on him, and no one is sure where he stands.

Former congressman Gibson told me he suggested that Pat Smith be appointed to the panel (she already sits on a Lyme advisory panel within the Department of Defense), but there’s no indication anyone in HHS has given a moment’s thought to the Working Group, which has until the end of 2018 to produce its first report.

It may seem insignificant, who gets to sit on a government panel that doesn’t have any real responsibility besides writing white papers hardly anyone’s going to read. But there are bigger issues at play.

Many of the difficulties that have made Lyme disease a political issue—intellectual and scientific dishonesty, distrust of institutions, unaccountable government—plague American society generally. Congress has now tried to help. We’ll see how it goes. ♦

The Savvy Rube

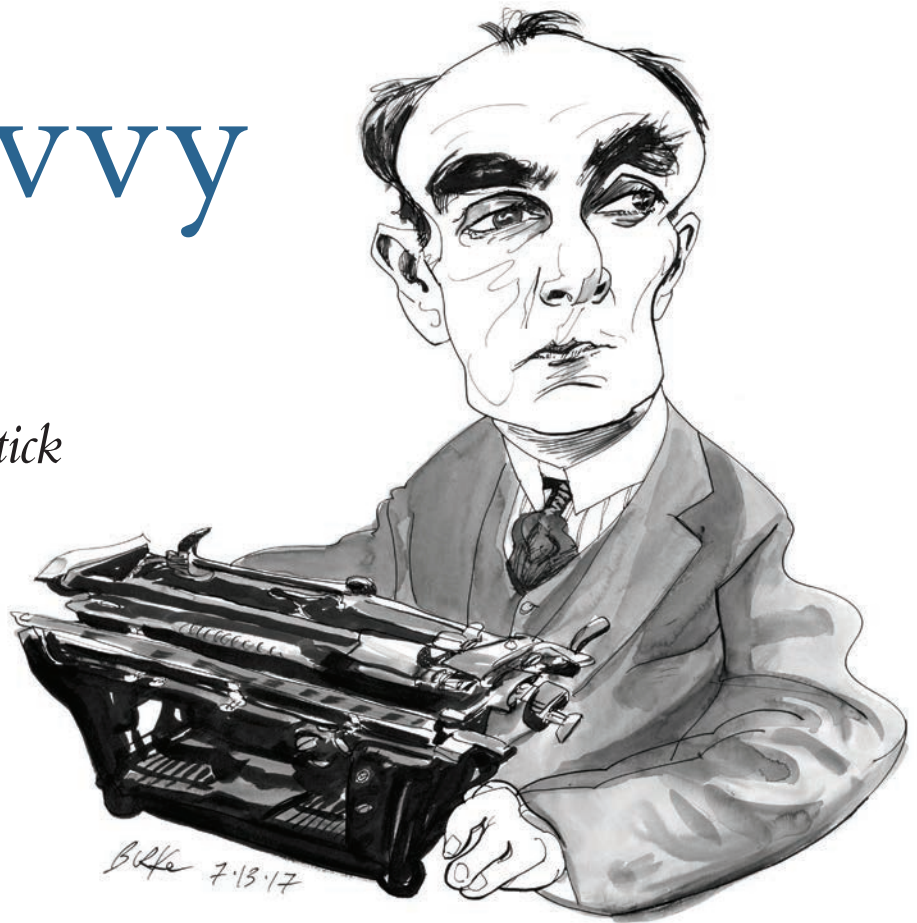
Does Ring Lardner's shtick stand the test of time?

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

In the introduction to *A Subtreasury of American Humor*, published in 1941, E. B. White told of the various disappointments and disillusionments he and his wife had encountered in gathering the pieces that would make up the anthology. They had hoped to include a section of “newspaper humor” and canvassed friends and colleagues for suggestions. “We collected them, all right, and some of them were funny,” White wrote, but “old newspaper stories have an odor all their own. . . . After you find them, you wish you hadn’t.”

All readers know the disappointment of returning years later to some fondly remembered piece of writing and finding it withered with age. When I came upon this new collection from the University of Nebraska Press, *The Lost Journalism of Ring Lardner*, I braced myself for the familiar disappointment. Lardner started writing for newspaper sports pages before he was 20, and he kept it up, off and on, until his death in 1933. By then he was one of the most famous writers in America; his best-known book, an epistolary novel called *You Know Me Al*, has never been out of print (and is now available for free all over the web). He published his fiction

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**The Lost Journalism
of Ring Lardner**
edited by Ron Rapoport
Nebraska, 592 pp., \$39.95

in only the most popular and highest-paying magazines. For generations, “Champion,” “The Golden Honeymoon,” “Haircut,” “I Can’t Breathe,” and several others stood as classics that every American high schooler was supposed to pretend to have read. His short stories revealed him, unexpectedly, to be an artist of very high rank, and he was certified as such by F. Scott Fitzgerald on this side of the Atlantic and by Virginia Woolf on the other. “Mr. Lardner has talents of a remarkable order,” Woolf wrote. “He writes the best [American] prose that has come our way.”

Every tendril of 20th-century American literature and entertainment shows his influence. You find him in

art high and low. The grotesques of Flannery O’Connor, Eudora Welty’s sly Southern hicks, the laconic heroes of Hemingway’s first stories, Liebling’s boxers, the rummies of Joseph Mitchell—they are unimaginable without Lardner’s having gone before. We can say the same about James Thurber and Dave Barry, Li’l Abner and Pogo, even the great Warner Bros. cartoons, on up to the surreal comedy of Donald Barthelme and George Saunders. Lardner the short-story writer looms at the top of the family tree.

But it was as a sports reporter and newspaper columnist that he learned to write, and he always remained a journalist at heart: He wrote fast, in great profusion, and for the moment. Reporters on the run often develop little tricks that allow them to kickstart the motor. Lardner’s trick was to slip into the dialect of a Midwestern rube and write the way he talked. He was himself a college dropout from Niles, Michigan,

PHILIP BURKE

and had a touch of innocence in him. His journalism and his fiction are therefore sometimes hard to tell apart. In both, his sentences race along with double and triple negatives, grammatical boners, comic misspellings, malapropisms, and brutal disagreements between subject and verb. The new collection contains an account of a journey to Washington, D.C.:

Joking a side, me going to Washington as a sight seer will give me a chance to pal around with my old pals and maybe get acquainted with you dear readers who I feel all ready like I know you personally and I want you to feel that way about me as long as it don't go no further.

Ordinarily this would be another reason for a new reader to be wary of Lardner, uncollected or otherwise. The only thing that stales faster than newspaper humor is newspaper humor written in dialect. Anyone who has staggered through more than three pages of Petroleum V. Nasby can tell you all about it, though such readers are rare.

In this collection, admirably and doggedly assembled by the sportswriter Ron Rapoport, we learn that Lardner was not always a dialectician, if that's the word. He began his career playing it straight. His first reporting job was with the *Times* of South Bend, Indiana, 10 miles across the Michigan line from his hometown.

At the *Times* Lardner covered everything but had a special flair for sports, baseball in particular. The earliest piece collected here, from 1907, is a year's-end roundup of sports in South Bend, and already the tone is amused and detached. He was an excellent play-by-play man, as other pieces demonstrate, but he refused to take his subject seriously. That disposition stayed with him long after he started writing about other, ostensibly more serious things. He got tagged early on as a "humorist"—that "loose-fitting and ugly word," as Thurber the humorist called it—but he didn't seem to mind.

From South Bend his reputation traveled at least as far as Chicago, where editors of the *Inter-Ocean* newspaper offered him a job. He bounced from paper to paper, and after a brief stint as

editor of the *Sporting News* in St. Louis and another covering sports in Boston, he took over the *Chicago Tribune's* flagship sports column, "In the Wake of the News." Rapoport's excellent introductions and notes capture how vital newspapers once were in the life of the country. They were the cheapest and most accessible form of entertainment, and Lardner, writing a thousand words a day six days a week, turned his column into a one-man variety show, filling space with poems, plays, song lyrics, fables, bogus correspondence, and anything else that would consume column inches—even sports.

Writing up baseball games, he was of course surrounded by professional ballplayers, most of them country boys fresh off the farm. He began using their voice in his own columns. One of these efforts was a series of semiliterate letters from a fictitious hurler named Jack Keefe, sent to his friend Al back home in southern Indiana. Editors at the *Tribune* rejected it for reasons long ago lost to the ages, and unimaginable now. Lardner mailed the piece to the country's most popular magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*. It was immediately accepted, and it made a sensation. The editor asked for more. Lardner, now married with children, was eager to provide. Outside the "Wake of the News," the letters were his first stab at writing fiction for publication. Two years later they appeared as *You Know Me Al*.

He started writing for the magazines regularly and lucratively, and in 1919, he quit the *Trib* to become a freelance in New York. Jonathan Yardley, in his classic biography *Ring* (1976), quotes a letter in which Lardner explains his motive for heading east—the same one that has goosed every freelance writer who ever lived. "It's dough and the prospect of it that would tempt me to tackle the New York game," Lardner wrote a friend. "I think a gent in this business would be foolish not to go to New York if he had a good chance. From all I can learn, that's where the real money is."

The Lardners moved to an estate in Great Neck, on Long Island, just in time for the descent of Prohibition and

the rise of the Roaring Twenties. He traveled in heady company. Among his neighbors were show business stars (Groucho Marx, Bert Lahr, and George S. Kaufman), journalists (Herbert Bayard Swope, Franklin P. Adams, and Grantland Rice), and book writers (Joseph Conrad, P. G. Wodehouse, and Fitzgerald, who used his own sojourn on Long Island to gather material for what became *The Great Gatsby*). Lardner was a devoted father and husband, but also an insomniac and a binge drinker. Long and productive periods on the wagon alternated with superhuman benders during which he would disappear for days at a time. He drank to cure his insomnia, and insomnia usually followed the binges. With a bender coming he escaped to the city, away from his wife and kids. Yardley tells the story of Lardner appearing at the Friars Club one evening for a drink and then another, and then one more, until he had remained in the lobby, quietly drinking, for 60 hours straight.

When he was sober and hard at work earning money, it turned out that Lardner's most pressing professional ambition wasn't to write short stories or journalism but to write Broadway musicals, and he spent a great deal of energy grinding them out with one collaborator after another. Sometimes they made it to the stage. He had a single hit, a comedy written with Kaufman called *June Moon*, and a long trail of flops.

It takes a lot of money to support a Broadway habit, and Lardner was indiscriminate in accepting the many freelance offers dangled in front of him. He even wrote a daily comic strip. By now his fame was such that magazine editors were paying him the highest compliment a humorist can receive: They asked him to cover events usually reserved for the Big Boys of the news desk—international conferences, political conventions, presidential inaugurations. Those reported pieces make up a good chunk of this new collection. Here he is at Warren Harding's inaugural:

If they have a inaugural ball I will loom up in a shirt of Chinese white over white B.V.D's, a 15½ collar of the same hue, flowered white silk brassiere, and soup and fish of Sam

Langford black with shoes and sox of some dark tint. I won't wear no ornaments except a place on my knee that somebody mistook for a ash tray New Yrs. eve and ... the old nose will carry a shower bouquet of violet talcum powder.

In 1921, a newspaper syndicate sent him to a disarmament conference in Washington. The conference was the first step in a diplomatic grind that eight years later produced the notorious Kellogg-Briand Pact—the treaty that declared war illegal. It was signed by most of the civilized nations of the world but—no need for spoiler alerts—it didn't work. Lardner suspected as much: “The object of this meeting is to get all the different nations to quit building warships and making ammunitions, etc., and it looks now like they would all agree to the proposition provided they's an understanding that it don't include they themselves.”

The voice of Lardner's rube-journalist wears better than you might expect, because the rube is sharper and wittier than you might expect, as rubes often are. I worry, though, that as 21st-century readers leaf through *The Lost Journalism of Ring Lardner*—it's a book for dipping in and out of, not for reading straight through—they will sooner or later arrive at the point of diminishing returns, when the humor no longer compensates for the strangeness and artificiality of the bumpkin dialect. Lardner's mastery of all the modes of American speech is essential to his fictional sketches of Broadway main-chancers, lovestruck teens, gabby Babbitts, and certified hicks like Jack Keefe. But in journalism, in accounts of real people and real events, readers like to know the stuff isn't made up. The dialect looks like a dodge.

It's not clear how comfortable Lardner was in letting the mask slip. The critic Edmund Wilson, who like most of his contemporaries revered Lardner's short stories, once wrote about an evening he spent with him at the Fitzgeralds' house on Long Island. Everyone was drunk, no surprise, but Lardner was happy to sit with Wilson before a roaring fire and talk about his work. Lardner said that his chief trouble as a writer was that he, Lardner, couldn't write

“straight English.” When Wilson asked him what he meant, Lardner said, “I can't write a sentence like ‘We were sitting in the Fitzgeralds' house, and the fire was burning brightly.’”

This wasn't quite true, as Rapoport's collection shows. Writing as himself, in a few straight reviews and essays, Lardner wrote effectively, if not ingeniously, in the American plain style, with no horsing around. But his overuse of dialect in his nonfiction may have been one reason his admirers pushed him to be more ambitious—to go long, with a novel or a weighty work of drama. Fitzgerald got his editor Maxwell Perkins to join the effort, and it was Perkins who first published Lardner's stories in book form, to charm him into seriousness with the lure of hard covers.

True to form, Wilson was the pushiest of Lardner's admirers. He went public with a review in the *Dial*, urging Lardner to reach for the heights attained by an earlier American humorist with a gift for dialect. “Will Ring Lardner, then, go on to his *Huckleberry Finn* or has he already told all he knows?” wrote Wilson. If Lardner “has anything more to give us, the time has now come to deliver it.”

Wilson's impertinence is breathtaking (and completely in character). That such a gauntlet could be tossed at the feet of a writer who had already written a dozen unimprovable short stories, not to mention *You Know Me Al*, and would go on to produce half a dozen more—well, it seems ungrateful at least. Perkins and Fitzgerald and Wilson and the other unsatisfied admirers of Ring Lardner misunderstood the nature of his gift. Lardner knew better.

One incident reveals Ring's feelings toward his own work. When Perkins persuaded him to agree to a collection of his stories, Lardner had to confess that he hadn't saved copies of any of them—not even carbon copies of his typed manuscripts, which he had ripped from his typewriter and sent off to editors without a thought. Perkins had to dispatch aides to libraries to fish the stories from back issues of magazines and newspapers.

This story only deepens my admiration for Ron Rapoport, who must have

had to range even farther for Lardner's stuff, going back more than a century. It also deepens my admiration for Lardner and his natural modesty. If he underestimated the stories he had written, he understood why he had written them and not something else. He was a slap-hitter, going for singles and doubles, rather than a long-ball slugger, swinging the heavy lumber and aiming for the fences. He considered himself a tradesman, a journalist through and through, from his spats to his boater. It seems accidental that he produced imperishable art.

He ended his career as he began it, writing straight, with no dialect, as the radio critic for the *New Yorker* magazine. He continued to produce his reviews even when he entered the hospital with a fatal illness. In several of the pieces he railed against what he, and no one else, saw as the shocking vulgarity and licentiousness of popular entertainment circa 1932. His younger admirers, from Fitzgerald and Wilson to Perkins and Thurber, were slightly embarrassed that their old idol, writing from a tubercular bed, had become a prig. The booze finally carried him off with a heart attack. He was 48.

“No other contemporary American, sober or gay, writes better,” H.L. Mencken declared when Ring was at the height of his powers. It's a serious compliment, given that Lardner's contemporaries included Fitzgerald and Hemingway, Willa Cather and Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis and Sarah Orne Jewett. Like Woolf and Wilson, though, Mencken was praising Lardner's fiction, not the journalism enshrined here. If this new collection, with its anachronisms and uneven quality, turns the casual reader away from Lardner, or if it delays a rediscovery by the reading public of Lardner at his best, then it may even be a disservice. Yet here and there some of the journalism rises to the sublime level of the short stories, and in it you can hear Lardner's most enduring voice. It's the strange mix that gave his fiction its power—the mind of a journalist married to the heart of an artist, making a creature as rare and improbable as the jackalope and heffalump. ♦



The ship's bell from the recently discovered Franklin expedition shipwreck HMS Erebus sits in pure water in Ottawa after being recovered, November 6, 2014.

BCA

Frozen Folly

The long slog to solve the mysteries of the lost Franklin expedition. **BY AMY HENDERSON**

Dreams of a Northwest Passage connecting America to Asia tantalized empire builders from the earliest days of New World exploration. But after the Napoleonic Wars, the British turned this fascination into an obsession. Sending out the fleet to explore new trade routes kept the Royal Navy busy and injected new capital into exploration. The rage for trade gripped Victorian England with gusto.

Exploration of the unknown was also driven by national pride, and the 1845 Arctic expedition led by Sir John Franklin generated banner headlines. One of the most grandiose schemes of its day, this highly publicized project was unfortunately doomed from the start, undone by a prevailing scientific belief that the Arctic waters were open and warmed by the North Pole's

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Ice Ghosts
The Epic Hunt
for the Lost Franklin Expedition
by Paul Watson
Norton, 384 pp., \$27.95

proximity to the sun. The reality was crushingly different, and the under-equipped explorers never had a chance.

Instead of adding another dazzling jewel to Victoria's crown, the expedition's two ships and 129-member crew vanished soon after London crowds cheered them off. The mystery surrounding their fate launched a series of nearly 90 search expeditions that achieved cult status and lasted into the present century. One writer called the expedition's afterlife "the most extensive, expensive, perverse, ill-starred" manhunt in history.

Paul Watson now jumps into the Franklin fray. A Canadian reporter who has covered the Arctic, Asia,

the Middle East, and Africa, Watson meticulously researched naval archives and interviewed Inuit storytellers to create this portrait of human folly and endurance. But he was also a participant, traveling in 2014 aboard the ice-breaker that found one of Franklin's two ships, and later was the first journalist to report the news of the other ship's discovery. Along the way, he came to understand firsthand the perils of the Arctic climate.

Ice Ghosts argues that the expedition was in trouble even before it left port. Watson describes Sir John Franklin, the expedition's captain, as "a celebrated Arctic explorer seemingly past his prime." Although his health was frail, Franklin actively campaigned for the post and the Admiralty finally acceded. But a faded daguerreotype taken the day before the expedition set out suggests good cause for doubt: Instead of a dynamic leader, the image captures a portly man of 59 who belonged in front of a fireplace sipping brandy—not helming an expedition to the North Pole.

Franklin desperately sought this spectacular assignment to restore his reputation. When he was younger, he had led overland missions to map the Arctic coastline with some success, but subsequent service as lieutenant-governor of the Tasmanian penal colony ended with humiliation: He was recalled in 1843. Franklin became convinced that the 1845 expedition offered a last, best hope to restore his public image.

The expedition's two ships, HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, were converted bomb ships. (*Terror* had memorably been to North America before: In one of the final battles of the War of 1812, the ship fired mortars at Baltimore's Fort McHenry, inspiring Francis Scott Key to write a poem about the rockets' red glare and bombs bursting in air.) The two ships were painted black with a yellow stripe and refitted with iron plating and steam engines. The expedition was provisioned for three years, with 33,289 pounds of preserved meat; there was also a library of more than 2,000 books and a hand organ for each ship. The ships also carried the latest magnetic surveying instruments—although when

CANADIAN PRESS / JUSTIN TANG / AP

the expedition actually entered the Arctic seas, these state-of-the-art compasses failed miserably, jumbled by the magnetic fields near the North Pole.

The expedition's ships left England on May 19, 1845, stopped at Greenland to take on more supplies, and were last seen in August by two European whaling ships in Baffin Bay near the entrance to the Northwest Passage. Nothing more was heard from the expedition.

When *Erebus* and *Terror* failed to return by 1849, search parties were formed. Artifacts and the graves of three sailors were found on Beechey Island, where the ships' crews had camped in the winter of 1845-46. An official naval record written by the *Erebus* commander was eventually discovered further south under a stone landmark at Victory Point on King William Island; it described how the ships had been ice-locked for 19 months, and reported that Sir John Franklin had died on June 11, 1847. It also stated that the surviving 105 officers and men were abandoning the ships on April 22, 1848, and that they would attempt to travel by land to a mainland trading post 600 miles south at Back's Great Fish River.

None made it. The Royal Navy had outfitted Franklin's men with woolen mitts and coats; in comparison, Inuit wore elbow-high wolfskin mitts and multilayered fur clothing. As quickly became apparent, Royal Navy seamen's boots were useless against the cold, making severe frostbite and gangrene inevitable.

No single mass death site has ever been located, but the skeletons that have been found indicated starvation and lead poisoning. (The solder used to seal the lids of the expedition's 8,000 tins of food may have contributed to the lead poisoning.)

Watson reports on many of the search parties that set out after 1849 to discover Franklin's fate, recounting the decades of efforts to piece together what happened to the expedition. The long hunt was clouded by egregious bureaucratic infighting, scientific bungling, and misinformation; Watson describes the search as "a tug-of-war between establishment experts sure of their knowledge and outsiders following an inexpli-

cable compulsion, an inner voice, or an educated guess." But even this veteran reporter gets swept up by the Franklin spell, admitting, "It really seeps into your blood. I became one of those people obsessed with the mystery."

Interest in the Franklin expedition surged anew in 1984 when Canadian anthropologist Owen Beattie led a forensic team that excavated the three sailors' graves at Beechey Island. The exhumed bodies were remarkably preserved by permafrost, and Beattie's account made international headlines when it published photographs of mummified sailor John Torrington staring eerily into infinity. Beattie's team also offered evidence suggesting that the crews resorted to cannibalism.

Watson describes interviews with Inuit who related their elders' stories about two huge ships—"the 'strange houses' that delivered dying white men

and then vanished beneath the waves." Few white searchers apparently took these recollections seriously. Then, in 2014, a coalition of Canadian agencies and the nonprofit Arctic Research Foundation began searching the polar seas with sonar. Watson himself was aboard the Canadian icebreaker that discovered *Erebus* in September 2014. It was in just 36 feet of water, covered in "a thick forest of kelp"—and, as it happens, right where the Inuit had long been saying a ship sank. The wreck yielded a trove of artifacts, including the ship's cast-bronze bell and two brass cannon.

Two years later, the other ship, *Terror*, was discovered just a dozen leagues away in 79 feet of water. No skeletal remains were found on either ship, and Sir John Franklin's grave has never been found. ♦

BCA

Still Chasin' the Trane

Fifty years after the saxophonist's death, jazz continues playing catch-up. BY ERIC FELTEN

When John Coltrane died 50 years ago this July, the *New York Times* wrote that he "was considered one of the most gifted modern jazz musicians of this decade." It was a reserved, careful judgment—*was considered* not *was*; *of this decade* not *of all time*. In the years since, the qualifiers have all fallen away. Rarely is there a word of doubt about Coltrane's greatness, and for good reason. But could it be that the overwhelming admiration for the saxophonist has been bad for jazz, a choking incense-cloud of reverence that has suffocated others' efforts? Could it be that Coltrane, most of all, would have had us move on?

Eric Felten is managing editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD and host of the magazine's "Confab" podcast.

Coltrane was only 40 years old when he succumbed to liver failure almost certainly caused by his years of heroin use—a habit he had kicked less than a decade before without resort to rehab or benefit of anything less demanding than willpower. But his short life encompassed worlds of jazz.

Perhaps more than any other musician, Coltrane straddled the major jazz idioms. As a kid he listened to the hot jazz of Sidney Bechet; with a Navy band at the end of World War II, he participated in the last gasp of the Swing Era; in the postwar years he was an acolyte of Charlie Parker and would play in Dizzy Gillespie's bebop big band. Before he became the quintessential hard-bop saxophonist, Coltrane was comfortable kicking up jump blues with King Kolax and, with Johnny Hodges, blew barrel-house tenor worthy of Illinois Jacquet.

By remarkable contrast, within a few years he had finished an apprenticeship with the high priest of modernism, Thelonious Monk, was an essential voice on the ultimate document of cool jazz, Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, and would be at the very front of the jazz avant-garde.

Through this "huge musical ascent," as Nat Hentoff put it, Coltrane radically altered "all previous jazz definitions of 'acceptable' sounds and forms." It's arguable whether Coltrane had as much impact on jazz as Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, or Louis Armstrong before him. But one thing is clear: No one since Trane has come close to the saxophonist in shaping the sound and structure of modern jazz.

Which isn't to say there haven't been efforts to move jazz away from Coltrane's dominant idiom: Miles Davis experimented with rock and funk; for decades the avant-iest have tried to take Trane's abstractions to greater extremes; traditionalists have tried to revive pre-Coltrane notions of swing; some saxophonists have looked for inspiration from alternative masters, such as Sonny Rollins and Benny Golson. But none of these efforts has pushed Coltrane aside. None has made Coltrane passé. Indeed, a young saxophonist who does his best to mimic Trane may succeed or fail at the challenge, but he won't sound dated. The Coltrane sound has proved as durable as the B-52 Stratofortress: It has been the new—the modern—in jazz for half a century.

Musicians copied just about everything they could from Coltrane—and not just from his own playing. Decades' worth of drummers have emulated the sound of his mature-period drummer, Elvin Jones. It wasn't just the roiling, crashing, polyrhythms they copied, though they certainly did that. They also copied his drum kit—in particular that, instead of a bass drum, he used a floor-tom on its side. Noting that this had become almost universal practice for



modern jazz drummers, Jones would later laugh: He had used a tom as a kick-drum not by choice but by necessity—his larger bass drum wouldn't fit in the trunk of the car they were using to tour.

The influence of Coltrane is stamped into the popular impression of how jazz is performed. One of the many times *The Simpsons* affectionately mocked jazz, the cartoon featured a jazz concert in a Springfield theater: The marquee promises an eight-hour show at which two songs will be played.

Blame Coltrane. When jazz was dance music the pop imperative of a three-minute song prevailed.

Even come bebop it was rare for a musician to take a solo longer than a chorus or two. It was Coltrane who stretched the notion of how long a solo could be, doing so to an extravagant extreme.

At times Trane defended that "stretching out," saying it was an effort "to explore all the avenues that the tune offers." Other times he acknowledged that he was long-winded. He told of how—after someone at the Apollo said, "Man, you play too long"—he tried shortening his solos, playing in minutes "all the highlights of the solos that I had been playing in hours." It made him think: "if I'm going to take an hour to say something I can say in 10 minutes, maybe I'd better say it in 10 minutes."

Earlier in his career he expressed a certain bewilderment at his own musical logorrhea, saying that once he got going he just didn't know how to stop. To which his boss at the time, Miles Davis, caustic as ever, said, "Why don't you try taking the horn out of your mouth?"

In those epic solos, Coltrane would play further and further "out"—outside the melody, outside the harmony, outside the rhythm. But Coltrane had the credibility to be abstract: He was one of the most technically accomplished,

harmonically sophisticated musicians jazz ever knew. Imagine that Jackson Pollock, before starting to splatter, had been the most skilled draftsman of his generation.

Coltrane's notes came in such coruscating torrents that writer Ira Gitler christened them "sheets of sound." The label stuck, more often cited with dismay than approbation. (One writer I knew whose tastes ran to Ellington and Basie expressed his Coltrane disdain by speaking, yes, of the saxophonist's sheets of sound, but with the double-e in "sheets" replaced with a short i.)

Even in the age of bebop and hard-bop, Coltrane's velocity was breathtaking. Combined with an original harmonic concept—obsession, really—that featured a peculiar progression of chords, even the best of fellow musicians often struggled to keep up. The speed and complexity of the passing chords are on vivid display in the title track of the album *Giant Steps*, recorded in 1959. Coltrane burns through the chord changes at a relentless pace; then it's the brilliant pianist Tommy Flanagan's turn to solo. Flanagan barely makes it through a chorus before he's lost, offering hesitant chords, grasping hopelessly for some purchase. A supremely confident Coltrane comes tearing back, rescuing Flanagan from an embarrassment typical of musicians trying to keep up with the demands of Coltrane's music.

Trane soon saw his hyperkinetic, harmonic athleticism as a musical hindrance. "My approach was so limited then," he said just two years after the release of *Giant Steps*. "Limited in what way?" asked journalist Michiel de Ruyster. "I was working strictly from a chordal, sequential progression pattern, you know?" Coltrane said. He realized that without melody, even the freshest chord sequences are soon exhausted. "But to write melodically is really the best way."

Coltrane wasn't wrong: Some of his most satisfying records are those—such as his pairing with Duke Ellington and his session with singer Johnny Hartman—that put him in heightened melodic contexts that radically restricted his more self-indulgent instincts.

Alas, for all those glimmers, Coltrane never did achieve the melodicism he admired. His own tendencies were much too busy. Take a late performance of his best original melody, "Naima," recorded in concert in Belgium in 1965. Trane presents the theme, and then pianist McCoy Tyner solos. When Coltrane at last begins to improvise, poor serene, lyrical Naima quickly transforms into something shrieking and frenzied. The

Coltrane realized that without melody, even the freshest chord sequences are soon exhausted. 'But to write melodically is really the best way.' Coltrane wasn't wrong: Some of his most satisfying records are those that put him in heightened melodic contexts that radically restricted his more self-indulgent instincts.

saxophonist keens repeated figures, counterattacking with honking notes on the bottom of the horn. Instead of melody there is wailing, squawking, and barking. Is it angry, as many critics perceived it, or ecstatic, as many musicians experienced it?

Some critics denounced Coltrane as "anti-jazz" for moving aggressively away from swing and for doing so with a tenor tone that lacked the voluptuous warmth of a Ben Webster. Others championed his changeability and celebrated his anxious, searching sound. For all the debate, Coltrane found an audience, establishing his most successful template—one he had trouble escaping—with his unlikely modal-mantra take on

"My Favorite Things" from *The Sound of Music*. He showed that modern jazz could be, if not exactly popular music, popular nonetheless.

Whether listening to the more audience-friendly Coltrane discs or the saxophonist's strangest excursions, there may have been no critic who disliked Coltrane more than British poet Philip Larkin, who had a sideline in the sixties writing about jazz for the *Daily Telegraph*. He and his pal Kingsley Amis shared a horror of modern jazz in general (an animus Amis expressed in a character's dismal New York jazz club crawl in *One Fat Englishman*) but he particularly disliked Coltrane. He captured a core complaint of the many critics disdainful of Coltrane and put it with an unapologetic bluntness: "It was with Coltrane," Larkin wrote, "that jazz started to be *ugly on purpose*; his nasty tone would become more and more exacerbated until he was fairly screeching at you like a pair of demoniacally-possessed bagpipes." The saxophonist indulged himself in "exercises in gigantic absurdity, great boring excursions on not-especially-attractive themes during which all possible changes were rung, extended investigations of oriental tedium, long-winded and portentous demonstrations of religiosity." Infamously, this was the sort of assessment Larkin offered in lieu of eulogy on the occasion of Coltrane's death. The *Telegraph* chose not to publish it.

Nowhere was Larkin more wrong about the saxophonist than in his claim that the legacy of Coltrane's music was all "chaos, hatred and absurdity." It's the hatred bit that is off. Coltrane was the gentlest jazz giant, generous to a fault, reluctant to speak ill of other musicians (or even critics). His spiritualism may have been something of a hodgepodge, but he was serious in his conviction that what was supreme was love. It wasn't in anger but in innocence that Coltrane told an interviewer "I want to be a force for real good."

The divided critical reception of Coltrane's own day has long since given way to a near-unanimous adulation. But one wonders: Has that been

an unalloyed good? Or has Coltrane-worship made new (and new-old) directions in jazz seem like apostasy? There are reasons to think Coltrane would be the last to embrace his eminence in the canon.

Coltrane's questing was so relentless that critic Joe Goldberg wrote in 1965 that in the previous six years, "he has run through several musical ideas so rapidly that a given Coltrane record may be obsolete before its release." Or as Ted Gioia has since put it, "Coltrane changed styles more frequently than some saxophonists change reeds." And all those styles have their avid admirers and imitators.

This rapid succession of styles may be a clue to the durability of Coltrane's influence on modern jazz musicians: He offers a variety of approaches to emulate. The fleet-fingered scale-runners find an Everest of virtuosity to summit. Those with less skill can at least adopt the distinctively brittle tone that Coltrane maintained through his many evolutions. Even those who can barely play their instruments other than to make dying-elephant noises find validation in the master: The great virtuoso himself gave credence to the debilitating notion that one doesn't need first to master one's instrument before achieving the freedom of pure abstraction. In his last years, Coltrane encouraged to take the stage with him a motley parade of players whose concept of free jazz expression was to move the keys on their horns and blow (at length, natch).

Coltrane's commitment to change didn't mean that he knew where his music was headed. "I've had a strange career," he told Leonard Feather in 1966. "I haven't yet quite found out how I want to play music. Most of what's happened these last few years has been questions. Someday we'll find the answers."

Perhaps no one would have been less happy than Coltrane himself with the way his various styles and sounds became and remain the dominant idioms of jazz. How strange that the legacy of a man who raced through half a dozen generations of jazz in a mere decade is a music that has been remarkably static for half a century. ♦

BCA

Glamour Shots

Irving Penn's burlap-backed beauties. BY JAMES GARDNER

New York

It is the besetting sin of comedians that, although they may indeed reveal important truths about politics and the human condition, their ultimate goal, in pursuit of which they will abandon all else, is to get a laugh. It is likewise the defining weakness of fashion photographers—even excellent ones like Irving Penn, the subject of a show at the Met



Single Oriental Poppy, *New York*, 1968

through July 30—that, whatever else they think they are doing, their highest goal is ever and always to generate a sense of glamour. Penn's expertise, his mastery of all the technical and rhetorical tricks of his trade, is so manifest that we are tempted to suspect—as the Met exhibition tacitly suggests—that he has transcended the genre in which he chose to work. Whether he has is the question before us.

Irving Penn (1917-2009) was born

James Gardner's latest book is *Buenos Aires: The Biography of a City*.

Irving Penn
Centennial

Metropolitan Museum of Art
Through July 30

100 years ago in Plainfield, New Jersey, and grew up in Philadelphia and New York, the son of a Jewish watchmaker from Russia. Penn never forgot his humble beginnings and, unlike such pedigreed peers as Cecil Beaton and George Hoyningen-Huene, he always felt like something of an interloper in the rarefied pantheon of *Vogue* fashion photographers. Surely that feeling was an essential factor in the evolution of Penn's formal idiom, which, by the time he reached 40, had moved beyond the effeteness of his antecedents toward the more earthy, muscular, even proletarian tone favored by post-war culture as a whole. Whether Penn depicted Peruvian peasants or T.S. Eliot standing before a burlap curtain, whether the natives of New Guinea, a cigarette butt, or the smudged face of Caroline Trentini in the latest Chanel, the guiding theme of his images was an aggressive protestation of honesty and a clamorous rejection of the mannered insubstantiality of most earlier fashion photography.

At a time when the consciousness of the entire world had been shaken to its core by the convulsions of World War II, it might initially have seemed barbaric—to paraphrase Theodor Adorno—to make fashion photography at all. But when our culture finally regained the stomach for such things, as early as 1947, it demanded something other than what had seemed admirable only a few years before. Into that breach leapt Penn, with his swerving, angular,

insolent images of the female form in dubious battle with the latest fashions. Whereas earlier photographers asked little more than that a model be lovely and stand still long enough to exhibit the clothes to advantage, this new photography injected tension and imbalance into the previously untroubled compact between model and viewer. Penn's manifold strategies included reducing the model to near abstraction: In *Black and White Fashion with Handbag*, a faceless Jean Patchett has become a sequence of black and white zigzags. Elsewhere Penn introduces a new physicality into his models: Mary Jane Russell provocatively removes tobacco from her tongue, while Ms. Patchett, once again, dives libidinally towards her man over a pair of half-consumed glasses of wine.

In this spirit, as well, Penn moves beyond fashion into such vastly different arenas as still life. The organized chaos of *Theatre Accident* (1947), quite possibly his best single image, is a symphony of muted browns, beiges, and blacks that exploits the granular textures of an opera glass, a gold case, a purse, and a stopwatch that have tumbled over a woman's dress shoe onto a carpet. Twenty years later, a comparable disruption is implied in *Single Oriental Poppy*, which rejects the privileged top of the flower—its zone of licit beauty—to reveal a dangerous underside of bristling thorns and petals as red as an uncooked steak.

From still lifes Penn turned to portraiture, shooting fascinating full-length images of people you wish you had met, like the orbicular Alfred Hitchcock, slouching morosely over a pile of burlap, or Marcel Duchamp cornered between two scuffed and narrow gray walls. Some years later, Penn radically reduced the frame of his portraits to contain the upper body and sometimes only the face of an impish Audrey Hepburn, a caped Cecil Beaton, and a startlingly young and limber Tom Wolfe, dandified in a cream-colored suit.

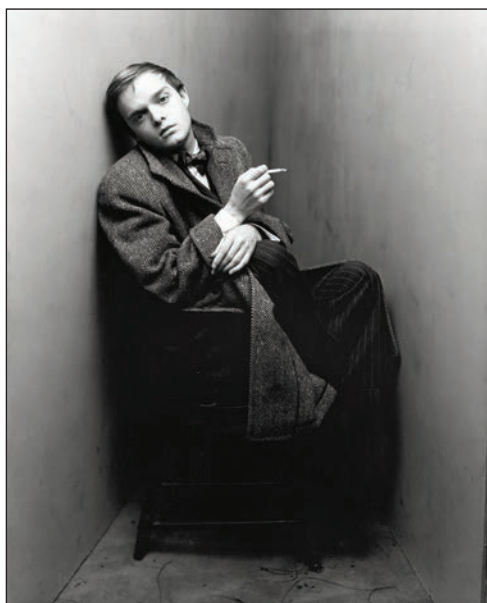
A variant of these images of the



Three Asaro Mud Men, New Guinea, 1970



Cuzco Children, 1948



Truman Capote, New York, 1948

famous and fabulous are Penn's portraits of working men: a waiter, a chef, a butcher, and so forth, captured in black and white and standing before that ubiquitous burlap that is understood to serve both as a warrant of honesty and as a great equalizer of high and low. These images are, of course, professional and accomplished. But that very competence heightens our sense that something is missing. Although these photographs are inspired by August Sander's great *People of the 20th Century* (begun 1911), the differences are instructive. The technical perfection of both men is complete, but in Penn there seems to be little beyond the image itself. Despite the aggressive assertion of unvarnished truth that is the chosen mannerism of his art, despite the implicit one-world humanism of his more ethnological portraits of the women of Morocco and the children of Dahomey, the one constant of Penn's photographs is the aspiring after a kind of suspect impressiveness, the attainment of such glamour and chic as might excite the envy and emulation of the readers of *Vogue*.

Unlike our present period of culture, which seems in a general way to promote political relevance above all else, the postwar era in which Irving Penn flourished gave pride of place to the exaltation of our common humanity. But that goal obviously conflicted with the inherent exceptionalism that is the stock in trade of the fashion industry, from the designers and models to the photographers and the consumers. Penn's ingenious solution was to transmute that common humanity into marketable glamour, and he appears to have shrewdly surmised that few if any among his intended viewers would care or even notice. Much of Penn's work lives in confounding those very divergent goals. His achievement is admirable as long as it is understood as fashion photography, directly or by other means. It begins to fall seriously short only when it presumes upon a higher status to which it has no claim.

TOP AND BOTTOM: THE IRVING PENN FOUNDATION; CENTER, CONDE NAST



Spider-Man...Again

With great deal-making comes great profitability. BY JOHN PODHORETZ

In the past 15 years, no fewer than seven movies have featured the character of Peter Parker, the Queens teenager who obtains powers from a radioactive spider bite. Tobey Maguire starred in three of them from 2002 to 2007; Andrew Garfield starred in two from 2012 to 2014; and after appearing in a couple of dazzling scenes in last year's *Captain America: Civil War*, Tom Holland now takes center stage in *Spider-Man: Homecoming*. If the superhero genre is the dominant Hollywood trend of this century, the Spider-Man pictures are largely responsible—and along with the nine films in the X-Men universe, constitute the form's most significant subgenre.

The only unambiguously good movie out of the first six was *Spider-Man 2*, which manages to be funny and touching as it details the difficulties Parker faces as a poor young man just out of college trying to maintain a romantic relationship and hold down a job and eke out a living when he feels like he must be on call 24-7 to save ordinary people from the bad guys. A record of achievement that low shouldn't have generated so many pictures. But then the Spider-Man subgenre exists primarily because of the peculiarities of the deal that secured Sony Pictures the rights to the character of Spider-Man.

After the dreadful *Spider-Man 3* was released in 2007, Maguire and director Sam Raimi asserted they would not simply make another stinker but would only do No. 4 if they could come up with something good and new. They couldn't. Meanwhile, the studio that owned the rights to the character was

Spider-Man: Homecoming

Directed by Jon Watts



required by contract to make a new Spider-Man picture by 2012 or watch helplessly as the character reverted to the control of Marvel—the comic-book company that had created Spider-Man and, with the release of *Iron Man* in 2008, had quickly become the most powerful brand in Hollywood.

So, in an astonishingly unimaginative move, Sony Pictures simply remade the original *Spider-Man* a decade after the first, with Garfield getting bitten by the spider just as Maguire was and learning how to use his powers just as Maguire did. It was lousy, and the sequel was even worse. As Richard Rushfield writes in his invaluable Ankler column, "It was the lowest-grossing of the five films, and after five Spideys in 11 years it was clear that audiences were exhausted. . . . The disaster couldn't have come at a worse time. 2014 will go down in history as the year of the Sony hack, i.e., the worst chaos inflicted on a film studio in history. It was also the year that Sony failed to have a single film in the top 10 box-office grossers."

At this point, something somewhat miraculous happened. The visionary head of Marvel Studios, Kevin Feige, went to Sony and negotiated an incredibly complicated deal in which Marvel—which is owned by Disney, a Sony competitor—would take creative control of the character and basically make the new *Spider-Man* movie for its rival. Moreover, it would reintroduce Spider-Man and the new actor playing him, Tom Holland, in

one of its blockbuster Avengers movies a year before the release of the new Marvel-Sony collaboration.

That reintroduction, undertaken in a scene in which Robert Downey Jr.'s Iron Man recruits the teenager whose powers he's seen on YouTube, was the unquestioned highlight of *Captain America: Civil War*. And now there's *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, which isn't the equal of *Spider-Man 2* but is leagues better than any of the others.

The key to the Marvel movies is the casting. Feige and his colleagues are extraordinarily good at it, as they proved in 2008 when they resuscitated Downey's career by handing him the lead in *Iron Man*. And they just kept going, with the delightful Chris Hemsworth assaying the clueless god Thor, the terrific Chris Evans finding both the comedy and humanity in *Captain America*, and (most impressively) Chris Pratt's out-of-nowhere killer turn in *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Tom Holland's Spider-Man was another astoundingly inspired choice. He looks, moves, acts, and sounds like an overeager, overexcited, and understandably foolish kid only recently emerged from puberty. He combines gawky adolescence with remarkable physical command.

Spider-Man: Homecoming works because it's a movie about a high-school kid. Peter may have freakish abilities and scientific genius, but he's still 15 years old. His judgment is problematic, his wisdom is in question, and his good heart is at war with the inevitable grandiosity that would afflict anyone able to do what he can do. He's a superhero screw-up, and as a result, an entirely lovable one. The movie's primary villain is equally down-to-earth: a contractor played by the wonderful Michael Keaton, who's pushed out of a good city job cleaning up after the Avengers and becomes a black-market distributor of alien weapons.

There's a moment after a clash between the two of them when Peter finds himself weak and trapped and alone—and he bursts into tears. It's the most emotionally resonant moment in any of the Marvel movies. That may not be saying all that much, but it's not nothing. ♦

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

President Donald J. Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin
G20 MEETING • HAMBURG MESSE, HAMBURG, GERMANY

TRANSCRIPT (cont'd)

but she liked it.

MR. PUTIN: Is that right?

MR. TRUMP: She couldn't get enough of it. She said it was so flavorful, so mouth-watering—when she sank her teeth into it, it was just dripping with juice. But that's what I hear everyone says about my Trump Steaks. You can order them in Moscow, you know.

MR. PUTIN: Really?

MR. TRUMP: Yeah, your first month of Trump Steaks is free and after that we just send you a bill. I just need your credit card number.

MR. PUTIN: Sure, sure. Sergey will give you card.

MR. LAVROV: Here you go—AMEX Black.

MR. TRUMP: It says "Rex Wayne Tillerson."

MR. LAVROV: That's fine.

MR. TRUMP: Great! So, I do need to talk to you about your meddling in our election.

MR. PUTIN: Yes, but first, tell me more about your great victory against Hillary Clinton.

MR. TRUMP: It was the greatest electoral victory since Ronald Reagan. The American people were fed up and expressed their outrage. They said enough with the lies. So they chose me instead of Lyin' Hillary. Because I promised to return power to the American people. Away from Washington, the swamp. And believe me, it was a terrific win. Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Iowa—I won them all. Why? Because of the message: Make America Great Again. What was her thing? Everyday People? I'm Every Woman? More Than a Woman? I'm With Her? Her own husband wasn't with her—believe me, he still isn't! But about the hacking—

MR. PUTIN: What about Ohio?

MR. TRUMP: Ohio, another amazing win. North Carolina, too. And South Carolina. And Georgia. Florida was a great win. Alabama, Mississippi—incredible. But, Vlad, you know I need to ask you about Russian meddling with our election.

MR. PUTIN: You did not win popular vote?

MR. TRUMP: Oh, but I did! And that's what I was going to talk to you about—the millions and millions of people who voted for me instead of Hillary. Now I've got this commission